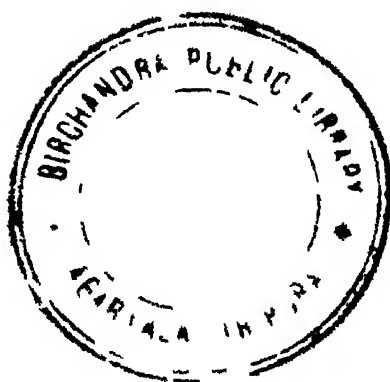


# **SWORD OF GOLD**

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ROY WALKER



ORIENT LONGMANS LTD.

BOMBAY

CALCUTTA

MADRAS

NEW DELHI

*on behalf of*

GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION

## ORIENT LONGMANS LTD.

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35 ASAF ALI ROAD, NEW DELHI 1

SOLE AGENTS: BAHADUR SHAH ZAIAR MARG, NEW DELHI-1  
PUBLISHED BY: BAHADUR SHAH ZAIAR MARG, NEW DELHI-1  
NEW DELHI AND PRINTED BY: UNITED INDIA PRESS, LINK HOUSE  
BAHADUR SHAH ZAIAR MARG, NEW DELHI-1

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## CHAPTER I

### THE LAWYER AND THE PATRIOT

HE was born in Porbandar on the sea-coast of Kathiawar on October 2nd, 1869. To the small boy the sea and the land were sights equally familiar. The land, warm and finite, peopled with plants, animals and men. The sea calm with a calmness that was alive, or moving majestically in harmonies the mind could echo but not encompass, the sea that lapped at the coast of India and stretched away beyond the limits of human vision.

\* \* \* \*

Mr. Giles, the Educational Inspector, did not look for a high standard of scholarship in the Rajkot High School. But a boy of twelve, he thought, should be able to spell correctly five simple English words. This boy alone had failed, and over the simple word 'kettle'. He sat tensely, head down, his face flushed.

The teacher followed the Inspector's glance anxiously. He had tried to prompt the lad with the toe of his boot to copy from a neighbour and so save them both from the humiliation, but either he did not understand or did not wish to.

"He is not a stupid boy," ventured the teacher as they moved on. "He is from Porbandar, and his father and grandfather have been Prime Ministers in several States of Kathiawar. He is the youngest son of three, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi."

"I have heard of the family," the Inspector replied. "They have more than once displayed insubordination which is invariably a sign of stupidity. No doubt they are more suited to the grocery trade, in which their ancestors were engaged, than to the conduct of public affairs. I advise you to be firm with the boy."

Mohandas, without looking up, sensed what was being said. When his teacher called him after the Inspector had gone, and the class was over, he trembled as he waited for the rebuke.

"Why did you not copy as others did and as I prompted you? Must you disgrace us all by your inability?"

Mohandas did not answer, but tears came into his eyes, and when the teacher dismissed him he ran quickly homewards. How could he say why he had ignored the hint? It was loyalty, a loyalty he could not fully explain. But it was like the loyalty of his father who had stood up to the Assistant Political Agent over an insult to his master, or of his grandfather whose right hand was pledged to the State from which he had been driven by intrigue. Better, like his mother, to suffer, as she did by her rigorous fasting and observances, than to be disloyal to the truth.

Loyalty to the truth is a dangerous loyalty. It must be a fresh vision, a living vision, partially unique. It will demand experimental forward steps. Not every step into the unknown is a step forward. But if truth is a guide into dangerous country it is also a guide through it.

Mohandas mixed little with his fellow-students and obtained exemption from all sports and games, preferring to take long solitary walks for exercise. For company he preferred his parents to whom he was devoted, and his young wife—to whom he was married when only thirteen.

But he made one intimate friend, a youth who initiated him into several mild vice. To warnings that he was in bad company Mohandas replied that he would help to reform his friend and would not be influenced by his faults.

Mohandas was tempted into meat-eating by the argument that meat was essential for full physical health and strength. He found the meals revolting at first, but he was much more distressed at the necessity of lying to his parents in order to conceal the habit. He still thought meat was essential, but deception of his family was worse than abstinence from meat, and he therefore decided to eat no more of it while his parents lived. This decision he kept.

The mischievous friend then led the young 'reformer' to a brothel, paying the bill for him in advance. But the boy was overcome with shame and fled.

The smoking habit was next copied from an uncle. The stubs of his cigarettes were soon found insufficient, and Mohandas and a relative began to steal coppers from a servant's money to purchase Indian cigarettes. Dissatisfied with this situation they contemplated suicide, but the prospect of actually taking poison

terrified them and ultimately they gave up both smoking and theft.

But when Mohandas was fifteen he stole a bit of gold from an armlet belonging to one of his brothers. It was worth about twenty-five rupees and sufficed to clear a debt into which the brother had floundered. This theft so troubled Mohandas that he made up his mind to confess to his father. He could not bring himself to speak, but he wrote down his confession and asked for adequate punishment.

Kaba Gandhi was seriously ill when the note was handed to him. He read it through and tears trickled down his cheek on to the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes and then tore up the note. Mohandas was overcome. His father was not naturally so forgiving, and he had expected anger and reproaches. But this clean confession had touched the best in his heart.

Mohandas helped to nurse his father in this illness which was to be fatal. But, although his young wife was expecting a child, he neglected his nursing duties every night for his passion. One night a servant knocked at the door and called out that his father was no more. Mohandas was overcome with remorse and more than forty years later he writes that this was a blot he has never been able to efface or forget. Another tragedy crowned the first, when the child born to his wife soon after did not live for more than three or four days.

Already, then, his experiments had caused him to recoil from a breach of the dietary tenets of his faith, from sexual licence, smoking and theft. Now the bitter lesson of strict control in his relations even with his own wife was forced upon him. But from all these blunders he had emerged strengthened, and in his refusal to cheat in school, and the boldness of his confession to his father, he had made progress. His mind was busy too, questioning the habits and rules of conduct of those about him. He could not feel that it was wrong for him to touch the family servant, who was regarded as untouchable. Although so far he had had no religious instruction at school, he began to learn scraps of Hindu scriptures from his old nurse Rambha; and by listening to his parents talk to their Moslem and Parsi friends he began to develop a toleration of all faiths, excepting only Christianity.

His dislike of Christianity was due to the habit of the missionaries to pour abuse on Hindus and their gods, and to induce their Indian converts to adopt European costume, to eat meat and drink liquor. "One thing," he writes, "took deep root in me—the conviction that morality is the basis of all things, and that truth the substance of all morality. Truth became my sole objective." He was gripped too by a Gujarati poem:

"But the truly noble know all men as one  
And return with gladness good for evil done."

In 1887, when he was seventeen, Mohandas made his first journey to Ahmedabad, alone, to sit for the matriculation examination, which he passed. For one term he pursued his studies in a college at Bhavnagar but then returned home. What was to be done with him? And old friends who advised the family suggested that he should be sent at once to England to read for the Bar.

Putlibia Gandhi, his mother, was anxious. Would not her son be overwhelmed with temptations in the strange and terrifying surroundings of England? Mohandas made light of the difficulties but readily vowed not to touch wine, woman or meat, while abroad. This was sufficient to set his mother's worst doubts at rest, and Gandhi departed for Bombay to board a ship for England leaving behind his wife, and a baby a few months old.

Meanwhile the caste, a sub-division of the Vaishnavas or worshippers of Vishnu, was agitated. No member of the caste had been to England, and Mohandas was called before a general meeting. The Sheth told him that their religion forbade voyages abroad. Gandhi gave his reasons but the meeting was adamant. Finally Gandhi announced his determination to go, even if it meant disregarding the orders of the caste which, he thought, should not interfere in the matter. On this the Sheth swore angrily at him and declared him outcast. The order had no effect on Gandhi, who displayed for the first time on this critical occasion the inflexible will which he showed so often in later years. So in September 1887 the eighteen year old youth sailed from Bombay for England.

During the voyage his shyness, which persisted alongside his unshakeable will-power, cut Gandhi off from most of his fellow-passengers and caused him many embarrassments. On landing

at Southampton on a Saturday, clad in white flannels, he was ashamed to find himself the only one in white clothes, and he was not able to change until Monday, when his luggage reached the Victoria Hotel in London, where he was advised to stay.

Despite the friendly advice of Dr. Mehta and others Gandhi found many difficulties, particularly in keeping his pledge to abstain from meat. One day he found a vegetarian restaurant in Farringdon Street, and there bought literature on vegetarianism, and ate his first hearty meal since arriving in England.

Gandhi now began to adapt himself to his new surroundings and his first efforts, like the first experiments in India, were unsuccessful and sometimes not a little ludicrous. He purchased fashionable clothes, found difficulty in keeping his wiry hair tidy enough to complete the effect. He took lessons in dancing, in French, and in elocution. He began to learn the violin. But Bell's *Standard Elocutionist* made him pause. How irrelevant these accomplishments were to his real purpose in coming to England! If his character made him a gentleman so much the better. Otherwise he would forgo the ambition. So in three months he recovered his judgment. But the punctiliousness in dress persisted for some years more.

Even during those extravagances Gandhi kept strict accounts of every penny spent, and economised wherever possible. He began to study seriously for the London Matriculation. As his studies proceeded his mode of living became simpler and more austere. He now lived in a single room, cooked his breakfast of porridge and cocoa, and dined at home on bread and cocoa thereby living on one shilling and threepence a day. This he says did not make his life dreary but harmonised the inward with the outward, so that his life was certainly more truthful and his soul filled with joy. His interest in vegetarianism broadened, and he found himself on the Executive Committee of the London Vegetarian Society, and started a vegetarian club in Bayswater, where he lived. The club, which had Sir Edwin Arnold as Vice-President, lasted only a few months.

On several occasions his overwhelming shyness caused him to make a sorry show in attempting to speak in public or before company, and he did not conquer this shyness until he went to South Africa. Gandhi believes that this shyness has been of the greatest benefit to him; it has taught him the economy of words

and formed the habit of restraining thoughts. Silence is part of the spiritual discipline of the votary of truth.

Towards the end of his second year in England Gandhi again began to study religious subjects. He was persuaded to become an associate member of the Theosophical Society for six months. He was introduced to the *Gita*, which he had not read in Sanskrit or Gujarati, in the English translation by his friend, Sir Edwin Arnold—*The Song Celestial*. He then read *The Light of Asia* and the *Bible*. The Old Testament sent him to sleep but he persevered. The New Testament produced a wholly different impression and the Sermon on the Mount went straight to his heart, for here once more was the theme of the Gujarati poem, that one should return good for evil. Among other works he read also at this time Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. It was in England that he first discovered "the futility of mere religious knowledge". Religion, he came to believe, can be vindicated only in action.

In 1889 he visited the Paris Exhibition and was not impressed. Of the Eiffel Tower he says: "So long as we are children we are attracted by toys, and the Tower was a good demonstration of the fact that we are all children attracted by trinkets."

Gandhi passed his examination without much difficulty, was called to the Bar on June 10th, 1891, enrolled in the High Court on the 11th, and sailed for India on the 12th. But he was uneasy. He had read the laws but not learnt how to practise law. Moreover he had learnt nothing at all about Indian law. And what would now be the attitude of the caste?

With these doubts in mind he came to Bombay again, the one bright hope being the prospect of seeing his beloved mother. His elder brother was at the dock to tell him that she was dead. His grief was very great, but he was gaining self-control and showed scarcely any outward sign of sorrow.

In Bombay he came under the influence of the talented poet, Raychandbhai. Three moderns, says Gandhi, have left a deep impress on his life. Raychandbhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*; and Ruskin by his *Unto This Last*. These he read later in South Africa.

The caste was divided into two camps, one of which at once readmitted Gandhi, while the other was determined to keep him out. The latter were favourably impressed on finding that

Gandhi fully respected their attitude and did not seek admittance, and his relations with them have been happy.

After some short time at Rajkot, Gandhi returned to Bombay alone to practise his profession. It was the custom followed by even the most distinguished criminal lawyers to pay commission to a tout. Gandhi refused to conform to the custom, but obtained a small case. On standing up in Court he was overcome with confusion and was compelled to sit down and turn over the case to someone else. He hastened from the court determined to take no more cases until he had the courage to conduct them. He did not go to court again until he went to South Africa.

Gandhi now returned to Rajkot and earned a small income by drafting applications and memorials, commissions obtained for him by his brother's partner. Here he compromised with his principle of giving no commission, which he had scrupulously observed in Bombay, but only in respect of this friend.

On one occasion Gandhi went to the Political Agent whom he had known slightly in England, to put in a good word on behalf of his brother. He had some doubts as to the wisdom of this move, but his brother insisted on his seeing him. The Agent curtly ordered Gandhi out, and on his asking to be heard, had him ejected by a peon. Gandhi, burning with indignation, threatened proceedings, but on the advice of Pheroze Shah Mehta, who happened to be in Rajkot, he abandoned the idea and pocketed the insult.

This incident had far-reaching consequences. It prejudiced Gandhi's chances of making a successful career in Kathiawar, and at the same time opened his eyes to the methods of many of the British administrators in India. When a firm in Porbandar wrote offering him work in connection with a £ 40,000 claim in the South African Courts, for which they would pay him all expenses and £ 105 for a year's work, he gladly accepted. So he parted again from his family, now including a second child, and sailed from Bombay in April 1893.

Now his life's work was to begin. He had no inkling that his stay in South Africa would last, with short intervals, into 1914, or of the epic struggle which would develop in those twenty-one years. But he was not to remain long in ignorance of the evils over which he won his first great victory, a victory which resulted from the evolution of Satyagraha, the philosophy and



method of struggle in which the lowliest have fought under his leadership and righted many wrongs in two continents.

Gandhi, in frock coat and turban, landed at Port Natal and was met by Abdulla Sheth, the principal of the firm whose case he was to assist. Before going on to Pretoria in the Transvaal, Gandhi spent a few days in the Durban office during which he was taken to see the Magistrate's court. The Magistrate stared at the visitor and finally asked him to take off his turban. Gandhi refused to do so and left the court. The point was not only one of etiquette. Not all Indians were so treated. Moslems might keep on their turbans but other Indians were denied the privilege as a rule. The implications of the order to Gandhi was that he was classed with the 'coolies', who formed the majority of the Indian community in South Africa. These so-called coolies were the indentured and ex-indentured workers, but the derogatory term was loosely applied to many other Indians, and Gandhi was referred to as a 'coolie barrister'. To take off the turban would therefore have been to submit to an insult.

Gandhi considered avoiding such clashes by wearing an English hat but his friends opposed the idea. Meanwhile he wrote to the press about the incident which was much discussed by the paper who described him as an 'unwelcome visitor'. A few supported him.

While in Durban Gandhi met two merchants who afterwards played a large part in his work, old Rustomji, a Parsi and Adamji Miyakhan.

After a week Gandhi set out for Pretoria, with a first-class railway ticket. About nine in the evening he reached Maritzburg, where station officials told him to leave his carriage and go to the van compartment. Gandhi protested that he had a first-class ticket and refused to move. The station officials fetched a police constable who unceremoniously pushed Gandhi and his luggage out on to the platform. The train steamed away.

It was a cold winter night and Gandhi, huddled in the waiting-room without his overcoat and with no light, was left to his thoughts. Through the long hours of darkness he fought one of the decisive spiritual battles of his life. His natural impulses was to give up the unequal struggle and return to India. True

there was insolence and oppression there also, but the oppressors were few, and somewhere in his own land it must be possible to live at peace. But there was another impulse too that told him to stay, to stay and fight. It would not be a fight for himself alone, for what he had endured was, he knew, but a foretaste of what the Indian community in South Africa had suffered and would continue to suffer, unless... unless they stood up for their rights and fought, not seeking revenge but, as the Gujarati poet had sung in his boyhood, to "return with gladness good for evil done." It was not for himself, but for his people, not for the Indian community in Africa only, but for the honour of India herself. No, it was more than that. It was the battle for humanity itself, for all who were sick and weary and oppressed. When morning dawned his decision was made, the way ahead was clear.

He travelled on to Charlestown, having failed to secure much satisfaction by wire from the General Manager of the Railway. But his new conviction was to be tested severely before the journey was over. The last stage from Charlestown to Johannesburg was accomplished by coach which halted for the night at Standerton. Gandhi had a ticket for the coach, but the agent told him that it was cancelled, as a pretext for refusing him accommodation inside with the white passengers who should not, he thought, have to mix with 'coolies'.

Gandhi patiently accepted an outside seat on the coach-box. At about three o'clock the coach reached Pardekoph, and the leader, desiring to smoke, spread a piece of dirty sack-cloth on the footboard and rudely told Gandhi to sit there. Gandhi quietly said he would not do so, but was prepared to sit inside the coach. As he spoke the man clouted him hard, and catching his arm attempted to drag him down from the box. Gandhi clung to the rail, and the other passengers crowded round to see the unfortunate Indian being cursed and belaboured unmercifully. Some demanded that Gandhi should be left alone and allowed to sit with them inside the coach but the 'leader' would not hear of it. Finally he turned a Hottentot servant out of the other coach-box seat to sit on the sacking, leaving Gandhi where he was. As the coach lurched on he glanced angrily at the Indian. "Take care", he said thickly, "at Standerton I shall show you what I can do." Gandhi,

still clinging to the rail, made no reply but prayed earnestly.

Fortunately he was met by Indian friends at Standerton, from whom he learnt that the treatment he had received was by no means exceptional. He wrote to the Coach Company but was told only that the journey from Standerton was undertaken in a bigger coach with different men in charge.

So he reached Johannesburg the next evening without further adventure. There he found no one to meet him and so decided to go to a hotel. But on being politely refused at the Grand National Hotel he went to his client's shop. He was told that no hotel would accept Indians, and for the last part of his journey to Pretoria he must travel third class.

Gandhi determined to challenge this discrimination against Indian passengers as such, and wrote politely to the Station Master. On the following morning he arrived at the station in a frock coat and placed a sovereign on the counter. The Station Master, a Dutchman, was sympathetic, and gave him the ticket on condition that he moved to the third class if there was complaint, in order that the Station Master himself might not be reproved for selling the ticket.

At Germiston the guard came to examine tickets and was angry to find the Indian. He curtly signalled Gandhi with his finger to vacate the carriage, ignoring the first class ticket which the Indian held out. Fortunately there was one English passenger to take Gandhi's part against the guard who went out muttering, "If you want to travel with a coolie, what do I care?" Here at last was an Englishman who disapproved of the colour bar. Gandhi does not tell us who he was, and perhaps never knew. But this gentleman did much by putting down his newspaper and saying kindly, "You should make yourself comfortable where you are."

The dimly-lit station in Pretoria on a Sunday in 1893 was not inviting, and Gandhi looked anxiously for some friendly face; but there was no one. He waited until all the passengers had gone and then timidly spoke to the ticket-collector who was courteous but unhelpful. An American Negro offered his help and took Gandhi to a small family hotel. The proprietor was himself free from colour prejudice but explained that his guests would not tolerate an Indian dining in the same room. He

offered to accommodate Gandhi if he was content to have meals in his own room.

Gandhi thankfully accepted the offer, but soon after the kindly Mr Johnston appeared again. He had spoken to his guests, and they had no objection to Gandhi using the dining-room. So Gandhi's gentleness and persistence again won the day. He had finally obtained a seat in the coach, completed a different stage of his journey in a first-class carriage, and was now installed in a respectable European hotel dining-room with the other guests.

The next day he met the attorney, Mr. A. W. Baker, who discussed the case in which Gandhi was to give some assistance, and found him lodgings with a tradesman's wife. Mr. Baker, who was a director of the South African General Mission, also talked about religion and invited him to join a small group which met daily for prayers. Gandhi gratefully agreed to attend the very next day. Besides meeting several other friendly Europeans in this way, Gandhi again began to read Christian and other religious books. Many of them had no effect on him, but he was impressed by the profundity and also by the difficulty of Butler's *Analogy*. He met a Plymouth Brother who left him quite unmoved. "I do not seek redemption from the consequences of my sin," he replied humbly. "I seek to be redeemed from sin itself, or rather from the very thought of sin. Until I have attained that end, I shall be content to be restless."

In Pretoria Gandhi also met the powerful Sheth Tyeab Haji Khan Muhammad to whom he confessed his ambition to get in touch with every Indian in the city. The Sheth agreed to help Gandhi to study the condition of the Indians, and a meeting was called. To this Gandhi made what he regards as the first public speech of his life. He argued to these merchants that truth is a matter of religion, and that business cannot be divorced from religion. Their responsibility to be truthful was all the greater because the conduct of the few was the measure of that of millions in the homeland. He criticised the insanitary habits of the Indians as compared with those of the Englishmen around them, and proposed the formation of an association to make representations to the authorities in respect of hardships, offering to place much of his own time at its disposal.

The character of this young man, whose shyness melted away as he warmed to his criticisms and proposals, made a deep impression on the Indians. They decided to hold regular meetings to discuss these questions, and meanwhile two or three accepted Gandhi's offer to teach them English. Through these meetings Gandhi succeeded in getting in touch with all the Indians in Pretoria. He learned also of the hounding out of Indians from the Orange Free State. Gandhi took up the question of the issue of first-class tickets with the railway company and was told that such tickets could be issued to Indians who were 'properly dressed'. This however was scarcely satisfactory as it still left the decision to the Station Masters.

Gandhi was on friendly terms with an Englishman, Mr. Coates, whom he had met at Mr. Baker's prayer meetings, and who introduced him to the State Attorney, Dr. Krause, and others. Dr. Krause, a barrister of the same Inn, expressed sympathy to Gandhi for the indignity of being required along with all other Indians to be indoors by 9 p.m. unless armed with a special pass. Instead of the pass he presented Gandhi with a letter authorising him to be out of doors at all hours without police interference.

Another regulation limited the right of Indians to free use of the pavements. Gandhi often walked down President Street, in which was situated President Kruger's modest house. One day he was passing a guard on duty. Without giving him the slightest warning or asking him to leave the footpath, the guard pushed and kicked him into the gutter. Coates chanced to be passing on horseback, and jumping off, he remonstrated with the guard. He offered to be a witness in court if Gandhi would bring a charge, but the Indian refused and preferred to avoid the street in future.

All this while he pondered over religious questions. He could not accept Christianity either as a perfect, or as the greatest religion, deep as was his regard for it. But neither was he convinced that Hinduism was perfect. What was the meaning of saying that the Vedas were the inspired Word of God? If they were inspired, why not also the *Bible* and the *Koran*? These difficulties he expressed in long letters to Raychandbhai. Meanwhile he read the *Koran*, and then was overwhelmed by Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. It left an abiding impression

on him, and made all the other Christian commentaries seem insignificant.

Tolstoy dealt with Churches and dogmas as so many obstacles to religion, rather than instruments of it. War was the crucial test read between those who gave lip service to human brotherhood and those imbued with the inspiring vision of not using violence in resisting the man who did evil. Not only the Churches failed. The learned men who formed societies failed too. They mainly hoped to bring in peace and disarmament and arbitration to settle disputes—through speeches, pamphlets and conferences, without direct action. "For them," said Tolstoy contemptuously, "the solution of the question consists in reading addresses, writing books, choosing presidents, vice-presidents and secretaries, and meeting and talking first in one city and then in another."

The churches were intertwined with the governments, and the Governments were there not to do the will of the people, but to bend the people to their own predatory wills. So the free conscience in its eternal search for Truth, recognising brotherhood, must needs renounce war, and renounce also the State, at least in so far as the State coerced its citizens into war. But the State was subtle. "As all the ends of a wicker basket are so hidden that it is difficult to find them, so responsibility for the crimes committed in a State organization is so concealed from men that they do not see their own responsibility for the most atrocious acts." "The better men are materially provided for," warned Tolstoy, "the more telegraphs, telephones, books, papers and periodicals they have, the more means there will be of spreading contradictory lies and hypocrisies, and the more disunited and consequently unhappy will men become, as indeed occurs now."

Gandhi's work developed too. As a barrister he adhered strictly to the truth and became more and more an advocate of arbitration to settle disputes. As the years passed he made many new friends and always pressed ahead with his experiments. He became more and more self-reliant and simple in his way of living, cutting his hair, doing his own washing, attending to sanitation, working voluntarily in a dispensary, and conducting radical experiments in dietetics and curative treatment which led him to conclude that earth and water treatments were sufficient to deal with most complaints.

His uprightness in his profession, so far from spoiling his career, made his reputation. But it was his ever-increasing public work that brought him to the forefront of his community. He had not been free to return to India when the case which had brought him to South Africa was concluded. He had got to Durban on the return journey at the moment when the Legislature was introducing a Bill to deprive nearly all the Indians of their right to elect members of the Natal Assembly. The news was brought to him at the farewell party given in his honour, and reluctantly Gandhi agreed to stay one month more to organize a protest. Telegrams and petitions were prepared with extraordinary enthusiasm, and almost ten thousand signatures were obtained in the course of a fortnight. *The Times of India* strongly supported the Indian demand and copies of the petition were also despatched to England.

With this agitation proceeding it was impossible for Gandhi to leave Natal. His friends begged him to accept a salary for full-time public work, but he refused. Instead he accepted retaining fees from a number of merchants up to the minimum required to maintain his household, thus supporting himself by legal work and volunteering much of his time and energy to public duties. He also applied for admission as an advocate to the Supreme Court, a claim which was hotly disputed by the Law Society. It was a custom that the Attorney General should present such applications, and Mr. Escombe—who was also legal adviser to the firm of Dada Abdulla & Co. for whom Gandhi had worked at first—consented to do so. The Chief Justice ruled against the Law Society and Gandhi was admitted. No sooner had he taken the oath than he was told to remove his turban. This time he did so, although his friends were dismayed at what they looked on as submission to an insult.

This is one small example of what are often cited as inconsistencies in Gandhi's behaviour and which did not give him much trouble. But surely here at least there is no inconsistency. On the first occasion Gandhi was a visitor whose status was not recognised, and the request amounted to an insult. Now he was admitted to the Supreme Court as an advocate and since some equality was granted the request was no insult at all. Elsewhere Gandhi remarks that there is little difference between the salute given by a slave to his master, and by one gentleman to

another. But there is a world of difference in the significance, and while honour demands that he deny the salute in one case courtesy requires that he shall give it in the other.

The petition was not alone sufficient and for sustained agitation, some more permanent organisation was essential. On 22nd May 1894, the Natal Indian Congress came into being in a packed meeting at Dada Abdulla's house. The minimum subscription was 5 sh. monthly, while well-to-do members were expected to pay about £ 2 or more. Later on the subscription was made annual rather than monthly, with a minimum of £ 3. From this alone it is clear that the movement was one of the trading and professional class, having little direct contact with the majority of Indians who were indentured workers under a system which Sir William Hunter described as 'semi-slavery', or ex-indentured workers living in conditions almost equally bad. A sort of debating society, the Indian Educational Association, sprang up under the aegis of the Congress, and a small library of books was collected. In all this work Gandhi was untiring. He wrote at this time two pamphlets: *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa* and *The Indian Franchise—An Appeal*. All this work obtained the active sympathy of all parties in India and won numerous friends in South Africa. And within the movement a sense of purpose was developing.

But if the poorer Indians were not included in the Congress they were not ignored. While the Congress was still in its infancy, a Tamil man in tattered clothes, head-gear in hand, two front teeth broken and mouth bleeding, entered Gandhi's house and stood before him trembling and weeping. He was an indentured worker, Balasundaram, working under a well-known European resident of Durban, who had beaten him severely. Gandhi's handling of the case was typical. He sought only to secure the transfer of poor Balasundaram to a less tyrannical master, and secured the consent of all parties. The magistrate however convicted Balasundaram's employer.

The case reached the ear of every indentured labourer, and Gandhi came to be regarded as their champion. He was delighted, and the indentured labourers who now poured into his office found a sympathetic friend to listen to their joys and sorrows. Labourers from other parts who went to Natal on



indenture came to know of the case, and reports soon reached Madras. Later, the vivid recollection of Balasundaram's wrongs was to be a powerful example for Gandhi in his public meetings in India where he was striving to secure support for the South African Indians.

Meanwhile Gandhi was reading with absorbed interest other of Tolstoy's works, including the *Gospels in Brief* and *What to Do?* There seems to be little doubt that Tolstoy's influence was responsible for developing the impulse which had made the young Mohandas question the untouchability of the family servant into a universal love of all living things. His concern for other forms of life is shown time and again, in his long refusal to drink milk because of the treatment to which cows are subjected, in toleration of snakes on the Tolstoy Farm. The few occasions on which he has felt compelled to deviate slightly from this attitude caused him much pain and anxiety.

In 1896 he asked permission to go home for six months. He wished to fetch his family, for he now saw that his stay in South Africa would be still further prolonged. And he was determined to educate Indian opinion on the South African question. To take charge of the Congress in his absence he nominated the two old friends he had met in Durban on his first week in South Africa, Adamji Miyakhan as secretary, and Rustumji. So in the middle of 1896 he reached Calcutta on the *S.S. Pongola*. From there he intended to go by train to Bombay.

On the journey he stayed longer than he had intended in Allahabad, but spent his time forming a useful friendship with Mr. Chesney who edited the *Pioneer*, and who promised to give the African question publicity. This unexpected interview laid the foundation of the series of incidents which ultimately led to the attack on Gandhi when he returned to Natal.

From Allahabad Gandhi went to Rajkot without halting at Bombay. There he wrote his *Green Pamphlet* of which ten thousand copies were distributed. The *Pioneer* was the first paper to notice it editorially and a summary of the article was cabled by Reuter to London; a summary of that summary was cabled to Natal by Reuter's London Office. The cable was not longer than three lines of print. But its exaggerated picture of Mr. Gandhi's utterances caused the storm which he encountered on his return. In distributing this pamphlet Gandhi showed

some ingenuity, securing the voluntary services of children from the district for some hours in the mornings when they had no school. Two of these children later became his colleagues.

Plague broke out in Bombay and Gandhi offered his services. He was put on the Committee appointed to look into the question, where he emphasised the necessity of cleanliness of the latrines, so that the Committee decided to make an inspection. The poor people had no objection and carried out the improvements suggested to them. But the upper classes often refused the Committee entrance and, although their latrines were sometimes in a far worse condition, ignored the suggestion for improvement. The Committee had to inspect the untouchables' quarters also. Only one member would accompany Gandhi there, and this was his first visit to such a locality. Here were no latrines at all, but the houses were clean and tidy. There was no fear of an outbreak in those quarters. An inspection of a temple, on the other hand, showed great filthiness and neglect.

Gandhi was at this time a loyal supporter of the Empire. He gladly found time to help the Rajkot Committee which was appointed to arrange for the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, but was uneasy to discover how much humbug there was in the celebration. He became aware too of the wrong note in the British National Anthem:

"Scatter her enemies,  
And mak them fall;  
Confound their politics,  
Frustrate their knavish tricks."

He was right to feel suspicious of the sentiment.

He now paid a flying visit to Bombay where he met Sir Pheroze shah Mehta who agreed to help him by calling a public meeting. He took back to Rajkot with him a brother-in-law who was seriously ill, and nursed him with great devotion. On the very day of the brother-in-law's death he had to go to Bombay for the meeting, arriving at five o'clock in the afternoon. Mehta asked if his speech was ready, and he answered that it was not, but that he could make an extempore speech. Mehta was not satisfied but by eleven o'clock Gandhi returned with the written speech which he was to make on the following day.

The large hall was packed, and this was Gandhi's first experience of speaking in such conditions. His voice sank lower and he trembled as he began to read, remembering his panic in the Bombay court room three years before. Mr. Wacha took the speech and read it. It was highly successful.

Gandhi made three attempts to persuade other barristers to return with him to South Africa but ultimately without success. Some even tried to persuade him to remain in India, but his work lay in Natal and he could answer in the words of the *Gita*:

Finally, this is better, that one do  
His own task as he may, even though he fail,  
Than take tasks not his own, though they seem good.  
To die performing duty is no ill;  
But who seeks other roads shall wander still.

From Bombay Gandhi went to Poona where he first met Lokamanya Tilak and Gokhale. They sent him to Dr. Bhandarkar, who agreed to preside over a public meeting there. Then in Madras Gandhi related the grim story of Balasundaram and aroused great enthusiasm. Soon afterwards he produced a second edition of the *Green Pamphlet*.

In Calcutta there were difficulties. Gandhi patiently began to surmount them and his scrupulous fairness and truthfulness won the friendship of Mr. Sanders, editor of the *Englishman*, who placed his office and his paper at the Indian's disposal. Before the public meeting could be arranged an urgent cable arrived from Durban asking him to return at once. The *Courland*, belonging to the firm of Dada Abdulla, and also the *Naderi*, were sailing at the beginning of December with about 800 passengers, and the company offered to take Gandhi, his wife and two sons, and the only son of his widowed sister without charge.

The vessels were caught in a violent gale and for twenty-four hours the passengers feared they were lost. Only Gandhi and the captain remained calm, and a firm friendship sprang up between them. The ships cast anchor in the port of Durban on December 18th. But the real storm was still to come.

## CHAPTER II

### THE STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

**GANDHI'S** speeches and writings in Natal had been more severe and detailed than his subsequent speeches in India. He deliberately described the South African situation less forcefully than the facts warranted. But to the colour-prejudiced white people of Durban, led by Mr. Escombe, who had supported Gandhi's application for admission to the Supreme Court, and who was now himself a member of the Cabinet, the three-line summary from Reuter's London office had been sufficient. Mr. Escombe initiated public meetings at which a resolution was passed that the passengers of both steamers, including Gandhi, should be prevented from landing in Natal.

Two accusations were brought by the Europeans on this threadbare evidence; that in India Mr. Gandhi had indulged in unmerited condemnation of the Natal whites, and that he had specially brought the two shiploads of passengers to settle in Natal to swamp the country with Indians. To these charges he was given no opportunity to reply.

As an excuse for delay the ships were placed in quarantine for five days. But the quarantine dragged on until the morning of January 13th, 1897. The firm of Dada Abdulla, owners of the ships, were bullied and even offered inducements to send back the passengers. But the partners remained resolute and had the support of an old advocate of the firm, Mr. F.A. Laugh-ton, K.C., and Indian leaders. Finally, the Committee of Europeans served notices upon the passengers, warning them that if they attempted to land they would be pushed into the sea. Mr. Escombe, finding that the Indians would not be intimidated, attempted to control the agitation he had led. He told the Europeans that they had displayed commendable unity and courage. Their action would make a profound impression on the Imperial Government; the Natal Government would obtain the requisite powers to restrict future immigration. However, he sent a message to Gandhi not to land with the others but to wait until evening, as he feared mischief.

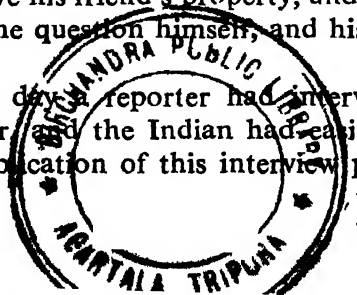
Mr. Laughton did not like this advice. It would be humiliating for Gandhi to slip furtively into the city under cover of darkness. So he and Gandhi set out together. A few boys on the wharf jeered and threw pebbles and soon a hostile crowd had gathered. Mr. Laughton attempted to hire a rickshaw, but the boy was driven off, to Gandhi's relief, for he thought it degrading to sit in a vehicle pulled by a human being.

The pair walked on, but with every step the crowd grew larger. Finally in West Street, a powerful man thrust Mr. Laughton aside. Another burly man hit Gandhi in the face and kicked him, while others threw stones and tore off his turban. Almost unconscious, Gandhi held on to the railings of a house, as he had held on to the rail of the stage-coach years before. Then with a painful effort he walked on. At this critical moment the wife of the Police Superintendent, Mrs. Alexander, appeared. She knew Gandhi well, and without hesitation opened her sunshade and walked beside him. This gave some protection, and Gandhi sustained only minor injuries after she joined him. They reached the Police Station where the Superintendent offered Gandhi protection. But this offer Gandhi gently refused and completed his journey to Rustomji's house without further incident.

The situation began to grow more serious. Thousands of Europeans gathered before the house, and after nightfall hooligans joined the crowd, which now demanded that Gandhi should be handed over or they would burn down the house. Superintendent Alexander harangued the crowd good-humouredly, playing for time, and meanwhile one of his officers disguised Gandhi as an Indian constable and assisted him to mingle with the crowd, and so escape to the Police Station. Alexander then told the crowd that their quarry was gone and allowed one or two men to search the house in proof of his statement.

Did Gandhi, who had faced danger so bravely in the afternoon, show fear the same night? Or did he consent to the subterfuge only to save his friend's property, and his wife and children? He poses the question himself, and his reply is, who can say?

Earlier in the day a reporter had interviewed Gandhi on board the steamer, and the Indian had easily disposed of the charges. The publication of this interview produced a revolu-



tion in public opinion, and many Europeans admitted their mistake.

The assault had repercussions in England. Mr. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for Colonies, cabled instructions to the Government of Natal to prosecute the assailants and to see that justice was done to Gandhi. To Mr. Escombe fell the embarrassing task of communicating this message. Gandhi refused to identify the attackers or to sanction prosecution.

"If anyone is to blame," he said, "it is the Committee of Europeans, you yourself, and therefore the Government of Natal. I cannot prosecute you or the Committee, and even if I could I would not seek redress in a court of law. This is a political matter, and it remains for me to fight with you in the political field and to convince you and the other Europeans that the Indians who constitute a large proportion of the population of the British Empire wish to preserve their self-respect and safeguard their rights without injuring the Europeans in the least."

Escombe had not been prepared to hear that Gandhi was not willing to prosecute his assailants, but felt that he rendered further service to his community by such self-restraint, and admitted that this gesture would save the Government of Natal from a most awkward position. He asked for the decision in writing to send to Mr. Chamberlain, suggesting that Gandhi should first consult his friends but Gandhi borrowed a sheet of paper and wrote the note at once. This action further influenced the Press which now declared Gandhi innocent and condemned the mob.

So Gandhi returned to his work in South Africa, to increasing the numbers of the Natal Indian Congress and its sympathisers in India and in England, to work among the indentured labourers, and to his own rigorous experiments in simpler living. In October 1899 the Boer War broke out and Gandhi, though sympathising with the Boers, urged the Indian community to offer services to the British. Many Indians argued that they should not be expected to fight for their oppressors, but Gandhi contended that since they demanded the privileges of British citizenship they could not shirk the corresponding duties. What of the higher loyalty to refuse assistance in any violent action? That might be conclusive for himself but not for his community: "If any consider that the action of the Government is immoral from a religious standpoint, before they help or hinder it they must en-

deavour fully and even at the risk of their lives to dissuade the government from pursuing such a course. We have done nothing of the kind." Still he would not become swallowed up altogether in war, and he organised an Ambulance Corps of nearly eleven hundred Indians, which was warmly praised by the Europeans. Many indentured labourers joined the corps, and it was mentioned in dispatches by General Buller. They had been accepted with the proviso that they were not to be put into the firing-line. The Indians had not sought to avoid the danger, and they gladly waived this privilege at Ladysmith, although none of them received even a wound. After Ladysmith the Corps was disbanded. The war continued and the Indians were willing to resume service if they were needed.

One feature of that least romantic of all British wars burnt itself into Gandhi's soul; the agony of the Boer women in the British concentration camps and the triumph of their suffering. Kitchener confined these women in separate concentration camps. They starved, they suffered cold and heat, sometimes they were assaulted by the soldiers, but their spirit was unbroken, and at last King Edward wrote to Kitchener saying that he could not tolerate it. If this was the only means of reducing the Boers to submission, he would prefer any sort of peace. The General must bring the war to a speedy end. Years later Gandhi wrote of this episode:

"When this cry of anguish reached England, the English people were deeply pained. They were full of admiration for the bravery of the Boers. The fact that such a small nationality should sustain a conflict with their world-wide empire was rankling in their minds. But when the cry of agony raised by the women in the concentration camps reached England not through themselves, not through their men—they were fighting valiantly on the battlefield—but through a few high-souled Englishmen and women who were then in South Africa, the English people began to relent. The late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman read the mind of the English nation and raised his voice against the war. The late Mr. Stead publicly prayed, and invited others to pray, that God might decree the English a defeat in the war. This was a wonderful sight. Real suffering bravely borne melts even a heart of stone. Such is the potency of suffering or '*tapas*'. And there lies the key of Satyagraha."

Gandhi felt that his work in South Africa was complete. Other young Indian barristers had arrived from England and the affairs of the community were so well organised that he might safely leave them to his friends. He wanted to do public work under Gokhale in India, besides practising the law. But his colleagues insisted on a promise that he would return if they urgently needed him, and he gave it before sailing for India towards the close of 1901.

The Congress was meeting at Calcutta under the presidentship of Mr. Wacha, who had read Gandhi's speech for him at the Bombay meeting in 1896. This was the first experience of Congress for Gandhi. He travelled with Sir Pherozeshah Mehta from Bombay and a resolution on the South African problem was agreed between them. At Calcutta Gandhi had accommodation near Lokamanya Tilak. But his attention was soon diverted from the celebrities by the untidiness of the delegates and he set to work to give a better example.

Gokhale took Gandhi to the Subjects Committee to hear his Resolution discussed. All day the debate on other matters continued and finally late at night the resolution was read by Gandhi, supported by Gokhale, and hastily adopted. Gandhi was given five minutes to propose the resolution in the Congress. The immense pavilion and the vast assembly almost overwhelmed him. He began to speak but almost at once Mr. Wacha rang the bell and the future leader of Congress sat down bewildered. In those days everyone raised his hand and voted for all resolutions. At that moment Gandhi probably had little thought of rewriting the constitution of the Congress, although this was one of the achievements in which he took most pride.

After the Congress Gandhi spent a month with Gokhale and witnessed the humiliating compulsory splendour of Lord Curzon's durbar. His own thoughts were turned in a very different direction and he finally made the journey from Calcutta to Rajkot third class, in order to share the hardships of the passengers. This for years remained his way of travelling, and was only discontinued when ill-health made it no longer possible.

In Bombay he made preparations to resume his career, but in March 1902 he received an urgent cable: "Chamberlain expected here. Please return immediately." So he went a third time to South Africa, leaving his family behind and hoping to



return to India in a few months. But he was not to see India again for twelve years.

Gandhi led the little Indian deputation to Mr. Chamberlain in Natal. The English statesman said that their grievances seemed to be genuine, but that the Imperial Government had little control over self-governing Colonies. From Natal Mr. Chamberlain went to Transvaal, where the Indians also wished to send a deputation, and again asked Gandhi to undertake the work. But no one could enter Transvaal without a permit, and Indians found this very hard to obtain. Gandhi obtained a permit direct from his friend, the Police Superintendent at Durban, much to the annoyance of the officials who had planned to keep him out. They were not to be beaten. They disputed the validity of the permit, and in any case refused to allow Gandhi to see Mr. Chamberlain a second time. Most of the Indians were for abandoning the deputation. Gandhi persuaded them to go on with it, giving them what help he could. The incident led Gandhi to an important decision. If this was how Indians were treated in the Transvaal, there was work for him in the Transvaal. He must stay. Stay he did. Within a short time he had opened his lawyer's office in Johannesburg.

The Asiatic Department by whom he had been so rudely handled in the matter of the deputation was, he soon discovered, thoroughly corrupt. Its simple policy was to refuse entry to Asiatics, and then smuggle them in on payment of £ 100. Gandhi patiently and openly collected his evidence from Indians and Chinese, and prosecutions were opened. One of the two absconded and was brought back by an extradition warrant. Despite this, and although the evidence against them was strong, both prisoners were acquitted. But their guilt was so palpable that the Government cashiered them. Later on when these men got into difficulties it was to Gandhi they turned for help, and he assisted them to fresh employment. The Court decision had shaken to the foundation his faith in the legal profession. Still for a while he continued to practise.

He was now developing friendships with several Europeans who were to serve him well when the testing-time came. One of his secretaries was a seventeen-year old white girl, Miss Schlesin. A few years later when all the leaders of the Satyagraha were in gaol she was to lead the movement single-handed, dealing with

thousands of people, managing a tremendous amount of correspondence, controlling the weekly *Indian Opinion*. Even Gokhale was impressed. She was, he said, the finest of Gandhi's co-workers.

*Indian Opinion* was begun in 1904. Gandhi did not edit or control the paper, but he put his savings into it and at times was paying as much as £ 75 per month to keep the little magazine going. Altogether he paid over something like £ 1,600 earned by his legal practice.

In Johannesburg there was a district which was contemptuously referred to as the 'coolie location' where poorer Indians had tenancy rights. The Municipality did virtually nothing to provide sanitary facilities, good roads or lights. They preferred to use the insanitary conditions as a means to destroy the location, and succeeded in obtaining authority to dispossess the settlers. Gandhi contested some seventy cases in which there was dispute as to the compensation to be paid, and lost only one. But having secured ownership the municipality took its time about finding new quarters for the Indians. Conditions grew worse in the location, and suddenly there was an outbreak of the dreaded black plague. The actual outbreak occurred in a nearby gold-mine. Twenty-three men came back one night to the location suffering from the dreaded disease. Madanjit, the proprietor of *Indian Opinion*, chanced to be in the location. He acted promptly and resourcefully, breaking open an empty house and putting the men in it, before sending a hurried pencilled note to Gandhi. A Dr. Godfrey also hurried to the scene. But twenty-three patients were more than three men could manage. Gandhi thought of the four Indian clerks in his office. He explained to them the danger. Their answer was, "Where you are, we will also be." Through the first long night these seven men nursed the twenty-three stricken with plague in the abandoned house on the Indian location. In the morning a message came from the Municipality. They were grateful for what had been done. They had no means to cope with the emergency. But Gandhi could have a vacant building for his patients. It was unkempt and dirty, but they could not undertake to clean it. They would send a nurse—and brandy.

So the Indians cleaned the building, the Indians found beds and other necessities and the Indians ran the hospital. They

would not let the nurse touch the patients very often, for fear that she might catch the contagion. The nurse gave the patients brandy. She took brandy herself. She tried to persuade the Indian helpers to take it as a precaution, but they would not. Gandhi had permission from Dr. Godfrey to take special care of three patients who had refused brandy, and who were given the simple wet earth treatment in which Gandhi was coming more and more to believe. Two of these three were saved. The other twenty-one died. A few days later the nurse was attacked by the plague and died at once. None of the others who had nursed the stricken men were affected.

Gandhi had sent a strong letter to the press holding the Municipality guilty of negligence, and this letter won him three firm friends. The first was Albert West. He wanted to help nurse the patients, but Gandhi refused. Instead, would West help run *Indian Opinion*? So Albert West went to Durban, engaged permanently for the paper. The second was the Rev. Joseph Doke who later nursed him and wrote a sympathetic account of the struggle, *An Indian Patriot in South Africa*. The third was Henry Polak. He played a considerable part in the later struggle. But perhaps he never did anything more fruitful than when he gave Gandhi a book to read on his railway journey to Durban. It was *Unto This Last*.

Before he could leave Johannesburg the tragedy of the location had to be played through. The whole population was evacuated, to live under canvas for three weeks in an open plain about thirteen miles from Johannesburg, and the location was to be burnt down. Gandhi became the leader, banker, adviser, of all these poor, frightened people. The Indians were removed by a special train and were supplied with provisions by the Municipality. Every day Gandhi cycled out to the camp to see how they fared, and to encourage them. On the day after the evacuation the ill-fated settlement was consigned to the flames.

Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hours' journey. The train arrived in the evening, and Gandhi alighted, weary but with his soul fired by the little book he had read. Tired as he was there was no sleep that night. *Unto This Last*, he wrote many years later, brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in his life. In it Gandhi had found a Western voice proclaiming with passionate sincerity the simple but profound

truths that were evolving in his own mind. Absolute honesty and justice based on the good-will men owe to each other. The sanctity of living creatures—the young, the unemployed, the destitute, the aged, the sick. An education which, after health, values the cultivation of habits of gentleness and justice and then training for useful work. The call to a simpler life, an ascetic service of mankind in which the light of the eye will be seen through tears, and of the body through sackcloth until the time comes when the gift of bread and the bequest of peace shall be ‘unto this last as unto thee’.

It is not in these essays that Ruskin speaks directly against machinery and in praise of hand-labour, as he does in the lecture on *The Future of England*. But we need not ask if Gandhi was acquainted with this later work when he too came to write down his indictment of our misuse of the machine four years later. *Unto This Last* was, of all Ruskin's works, the one that most satisfied its author, the one that most clearly reflects the light of his generous spirit. Gandhi's soul caught the full meaning of its message in the railway compartment. He did not wait long to translate it into action.

He proposed to West that *Indian Opinion* should be removed to a farm somewhere outside the city and be printed and published there by a few devoted people in the time left over from manual labour. Madanjit was appalled, but West agreed, and the venture was made. Fourteen miles out of Durban, and two and a half miles from the nearest railway station, Phoenix, they bought a hundred acres for a thousand pounds. There was a spring, a few orange and mango trees, a dilapidated cottage. Old Rustomji contributed some secondhand corrugated iron sheets and odd building materials. While the printing-shed was being built they lived under canvas, heedless of snakes. The Phoenix Settlement had begun.

Much of Gandhi's time was necessarily spent in the house and office at Johannesburg. Polak, after a brief residence at the Settlement, was recalled to share the legal work. But at Johannesburg too the influence of Ruskin made itself felt. They ground their flour, they did their own scavenging, and Gandhi was his own barber and launderer. Mrs. Gandhi and her three sons had now come from India, and Polak had married. But the household at Johannesburg was not to last. The Zulu

Rebellion came in 1906, Gandhi volunteered to form an Indian Ambulance Corps, and when his offer was accepted the house was given up, his family going to Phoenix. Temporary Sergeant-Major Gandhi with three selected sergeants, a corporal, and twenty privates served only for six weeks.

The Zulus whom they nursed had not been wounded in battle. Some had been arrested as suspects and brutally flogged. There were ugly open wounds, festering for want of attention, and the white people would not nurse Zulus. There were friendly Zulus too who had been wearing the distinguishing badges but had none the less been shot at by the soldiers—by mistake.

So the brown men went among the stricken black men, and the white soldiers peered through the railings and urged the Indians not to attend to their wounds. When the Indians took no notice, the advice turned to rage and abuse. Only the superior officers came over to thank Gandhi and his volunteers; even they could not conceal their surprise.

It wasn't war, Gandhi found out, it was a man-hunt. His loyalty was strained to the limit, and only the thought that but for his work the Zulu wounded would be unattended kept him there. In his mind a deeper war was waged, and Gandhi came back from the field pledged to more than the poverty and simplicity of Phoenix, bound to observe chastity, the sacred *Brahmacharya*. To him it was the completion of the code of discipline and control which he had been building, and its natural culmination.

He had time only for a flying visit to Phoenix, but we can picture him there as C.F. Andrews once saw him "in the still after glow of a dark evening twilight . . . The strain of a long day of unwearied ministry among the poor was over, and Mahatma Gandhi was seated under the open sky, tired almost beyond human endurance, but at even such a time he nursed a sick child on his lap who clung to him with a pathetic affection." A Zulu girl was there too, and, as they sat together, Gandhi asked Andrews to sing a favourite hymn. As Andrews sang, the darkness grew deeper and deeper round his song. "Lead, Kindly Light" he sang, and he gazed at his friend, young still, but with his frail body already worn with suffering that could never be laid aside even for a moment; and yet with the spirit radiant inside him. They sat in silence when the hymn was finished and

the Indian softly repeated to himself the last two lines.

From Phoenix Gandhi hurried to Johannesburg to answer the call of the many letters and telegrams that had poured in while he was away on service with his Ambulance Corps among the Zulus. He found in the *Transvaal Government Gazette Extraordinary*, of August 22nd 1906, a new Ordinance aimed at the Indians and other Asiatics.

The White settlers, unwilling to develop South Africa by their own manual labour, and unable to coerce the Zulu into doing it for them, had resorted to a system of indenture under which Indian labourers were brought over under a five-year contract. Gandhi in his own history of the ensuing struggle devotes a number of chapters to a careful statement of the facts and the grievances. Here is an impression by C.F. Andrews:

"Even since the year 1861, Indians had been recruited for the plantations of Natal by a system of labour called indenture. This system became more and more vicious as the years went on, and its many abuses proved quite incurable. Recruiting in India for it was liable to prove fraudulent, because professional recruiters were employed, who were paid so much per head for each recruit. More was paid for recruiting a woman than for recruiting a man. Very many thousands had gone over, under this indenture, until there were more Indians in Natal than there were Europeans.

"The original signed agreement with the Indian Government was, that if the labourers fulfilled their five years service under indenture, they should be free to settle afterwards in Natal. But attempts had been made to get round this agreement by imposing a £ 5 tax on every Indian who came out of indenture. This tax was only remitted if the labourer agreed to go back to the plantation and serve under indenture again. If he refused to do this, and did not pay the tax, he was deported. In this way the Natal Government hoped either to get back the Indians on to the plantations, or else to drive them out of the country. For they were far too poor to pay such a monstrous poll-tax, which was imposed on women as well as men, and also on children over fifteen.

"This indentured Indian labour on the plantations was semi-servile in character. Sir W.W. Hunter, the historian, has called it 'bordering on slavery'. The phrase was a correct

description, as I found out for myself after the most careful examination. No Indian could choose his own employer, or leave the plantation on which he was employed. If he did so, he was prosecuted as a criminal.

"Although there was Government inspection, cruelties were seldom remedied, because the Indian labourers were too frightened to give evidence against their overseers and masters. The most evil part, however, of the whole system was this that only forty women were recruited along with every hundred men. Since very few married couples came out from India, this fatal discrepancy between men and women on the plantation led to frightful immorality."

But in the earlier years before the threat latent in the Indian majority was apparent, Indian traders and professional men had little difficulty in entering South Africa. They traded not only with the Indian labourers but also with the Zulus, and to some extent with the white men. Soon there were Indian traders in all the South African States, and Indians were buying property. The general attitude towards them is made all too clear by the incidents of Gandhi's first arrival in the country.

The object of the Transvaal Ordinance, and of the administrative and legislative manoeuvring was not merely to limit Indian immigration but, as far as possible, to make the position of the non-labouring Indians unbearable, while tightening the grip on those in the plantations.

Gandhi went with a friend to a hill near his house and began to translate the Ordinance into Gujarati for *Indian Opinion*. As he read he found nothing but hatred of his people. It was, for the Indian community, a question of life and death. They must appeal, petition, send deputations . . . and if Tolstoy had been right and these things should prove fruitless they had better die than submit to the law. But how could they struggle against the Government? It was as though they faced a wall. He turned again to the Ordinance.

Every Indian of eight years and upwards was to register afresh giving name, residence, caste, age, etc. Identification marks would be noted, and finger-prints taken. The certificates must be produced everywhere on demand, even in the streets, and police might enter private houses to demand them. Fines, im-

prisonment and deportation were the penalties for infringement. This was no scheme of National Registration for all citizens. It was an insulting system of licensing aimed at the Asiatics. There was a small meeting next day. When Gandhi had explained the Ordinance one of his hearers exclaimed fiercely, "If any one came forward to demand a certificate from my wife, I would shoot him on the spot and take the consequences." But Gandhi had wiser counsel. This was not the last step, but the first, he said, with a view to hound them out of the country.

They carried the responsibility not only for the Indians in Transvaal nor only for the Indians in other parts of South Africa; India's honour was in their keeping. "We are innocent, and insult offered to a single innocent member of a nation is tantamount to insulting the nation as a whole. It will not, therefore, do to be hasty, impatient or angry. That cannot save us from this onslaught. But God will come to our help, if we calmly think out and carry out in time measures of resistance, presenting a united front and bearing the hardship which such resistance brings in its train."

So on September 11, 1906 the old Empire Theatre in Johannesburg was packed from floor to ceiling with Indians called together to determine what action should be taken. Sheth Haji Habib, one of the speakers, declared in the name of God that he would never submit to that law, and advised all others present to do likewise. This brought Gandhi to his feet again. He had not contemplated the oath being taken in that way, but in a moment he had felt the rightness of it and seen the immense responsibilities it implied. "Personally I hold," he told the three thousand eager listeners, "that a man who deliberately and intelligently takes a pledge and then breaks it, forfeits his manhood." To hold to the pledge that had been proposed might mean fines, flogging, jail, and for some, death. "If some one asks me when and how the struggle may end, I may say that if the entire community manfully stands the test, the end will be near. If many of us fall back under storm and stress, the struggle will be prolonged. But I can boldly declare, and with certainty, that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge, there can only be one end to the struggle, and that is victory." The meeting listened in perfect quiet. Then at the end of the proceedings the President, Abdul Gani, again repeated the cautions



and all present with upraised hands took an oath with God as witness not to submit to the Ordinance if it became law. The next day the theatre was wholly destroyed by fire. The last words spoken in it were that solemn oath. But the scene remained when the theatre was gone, everpresent to the minds of all those who took part in it.

Negotiations were opened and at once the Government gave ground slightly, exempting women from the Black Ordinance. But on the main issue they were adamant. The Indians prepared for the struggle, and in preparing, found they knew not how to describe what it was they were doing and meant to do. "Passive resistance" would be misleading. So a new word was coined, "Satyagraha" from *Satya* (Truth) which also implied love and firmness and *Agraha* (Grasp) so that the compound word might be freely translated as "holding on to Truth in the spirit of love."

The distinction between Satyagraha and Passive Resistance was quite fundamental. Passive Resistance is usually considered to be the weapon of the weak, Satyagraha was the weapon of the strong. "In passive resistance," Gandhi explains, "there is always present an idea of harassing the other party and there is a simultaneous readiness to undergo any hardships entailed upon us by such activity; while in Satyagraha there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent. Satyagraha postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person."

The Black Ordinance became the Black Act, and the next move was plainly an appeal to the King, since the royal assent was still necessary at that time to Acts of the Transvaal Legislature. A deputation to England was arranged and after much discussion Gandhi—who had flatly refused to go alone—convinced his friends that a Moslem representative should accompany him; Mr. H.O. Ali was chosen. Pledges were renewed, but Gandhi saw there was some hesitation.

So Gandhi came a second time to England. He remained about six weeks in London and saw, among others, Elgin, Morley, Naoroji and Redmond; he addressed, and obtained the backing of the East India Association. However, much time was spent in following what Gandhi thought was the "barbarous custom of inaugurating movements at dinners". At first it seemed that their efforts had been successful. At Madeira on the way home they received a cable to say that Lord Elgin, Secre-

tary of State for the Colonies, had declared that he was unable without further consideration to advise the King that the Ordinance should be brought into operation.

That was in 1906. But responsible Government was to be conferred on the Transvaal on January 1st, 1907, and so Lord Elgin had hinted that if an identical measure were passed after that date, it would not be refused Royal Assent. So that in effect Britain had avoided a flagrant departure from the avowed principle of not allowing racial discrimination within the Empire, but had positively encouraged the Europeans in Transvaal to introduce such discrimination in a less embarrassing manner. The first measure passed by the new Transvaal Parliament was the budget; the second was the Asiatic Registration Act. It was rushed through all its stages at a single sitting on March 21st 1907. It was to take effect from July when all Indians were required to register.

On the last day of July, as the time-limit expired, the Indians met in the grounds of the Mosque at Pretoria. General Botha sent an European to deliver a message for him to the crowd of two thousand seated quietly on the ground. The messenger referred to the general hostility of the Transvaal Europeans to the Indian community; General Botha was helpless, he said. The Indians had put up a manful resistance, and they should now submit "to prove their loyalty and love of peace." But the meeting would not be cajoled. They cheered one of their number who swore that he would be hanged rather than submit to the Black Act. There were 12,000 Indians in the Transvaal, 10,000 of them in Johannesburg. Of all these only 500 registered, although the pickets were not permitted to be violent or even rude in approaching those who might intend to register. The Satyagraha had begun.

The first step was made with great caution. An Indian was arrested, convicted and imprisoned for one month. As it happened he was rather a worthless individual, and after basking in his unexpected popularity for a short while he deserted the movement and left Transvaal. Gandhi, as a leader, was beginning to experience the real difficulties of guiding any large number of people.

A pause followed. Then at the end of December 1907 the known leaders of resistance were summoned, and given up to

fourteen days in which to quit Transvaal. On January 10th, 1908, Gandhi and others appeared again before the Court and Gandhi made a statement. Compatriots at Pretoria had just been sentenced to three months hard labour and heavy fines. If they had committed an offence he had committed a greater offence. He therefore asked the Magistrate to impose the heaviest penalty. But he received a sentence of only two months' simple imprisonment.

Within a week there were more than a hundred prisoners in the Johannesburg jail, treated as 'Black' under the system which recognised two classes of convicts: 'Blacks and Whites'. After the first few cases prisoners were sentenced to hard labour. Gradually the number of Satyagrahi prisoners rose to a hundred and fifty. But after Gandhi had been in prison for a fortnight fresh arrivals brought news of impending negotiations about a compromise with the Government.

A European, Mr. Albert Cartwright, editor of a Transvaal newspaper, was willing to mediate, and General Smuts had welcomed the offer. The Indian leaders who remained outside declared that they could not possibly parley so long as Gandhi was in prison, and so Cartwright came to the prison, bringing with him terms of settlement approved by General Smuts.

The substance of the proposed settlement was that the Indians should register voluntarily, and not under the law; that the details to be entered in the new certificates should be settled in consultation with the Indian community; and that if the majority of the Indians registered voluntarily, Government would repeal the Black Act and legalise voluntary registration.

In fact it seemed that the reasonable terms which had been denied to the appeal of reason and common humanity were now offered to the convicted prisoners who had shown at least, that coercion could not necessarily induce conformity to injustice. There was one snag: the condition which required the Government to repeal the Black Act was not quite clear. Gandhi insisted on an amendment, and after consultation with the other prisoners, the document was signed subject to this one alteration.

A day or two later on January 30, 1908 Gandhi was taken to Pretoria to meet General Smuts. Smuts accepted the alteration and promised the early repeal of the Act. When the bill legalising the voluntary registration was drafted he would send

a copy for Gandhi's criticism. He respected the feelings of the Indians and desired that there should be no further trouble. By seven o'clock that evening Gandhi was in the train on his way back to Johannesburg, a free man (he had borrowed the fare from the General's Secretary) with the assurance that his fellow-prisoners would be released on the following morning. The second round had gone to the Indians, and at first it seemed that it meant a final victory, or what is better, a final agreement on terms acceptable to both parties.

At midnight he was standing in the grounds of the Mosque speaking to a crowd of a thousand who had collected to hear him explain the terms of the settlement. They were troubled. Suppose the Black Act was not repealed, what if Smuts broke faith? Should not the Act be first repealed and voluntary registration follow?

Gandhi's answer to the leaders with whom he discussed the situation beforehand was another step forward in the evolution of Satyagraha. Their argument, he said was just and reasonable. But it was of the essence of compromise that both parties should give up something, provided that they did not betray their principle. In this case their principle was this—that they would not submit to the Black Act.

"A Satyagrahi bids good-bye to fear. He is therefore never afraid of trusting the opponent. Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times, the Satyagrahi is ready to trust him for the twenty-first time, for an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed. As in, to say that in trusting the Government we play into their hands is to betray an ignorance of the principles of Satyagraha. Suppose we register voluntarily, but the Government commits a breach of faith and fails to redeem its promise to repeal the Act. Could we not then resort to Satyagraha?"

But if most of the leaders were satisfied with this argument, the people were not. They had opposed registration. Now their own leader was asking them to register! What could he mean?

To Gandhi this was, on a larger scale, the incident of the turban again. To remove it when to do so was dishonour was unthinkable. To refuse to remove it when refusal would be only ill-mannered was unpardonable. He tried to explain.

"What would have been a crime against the people yesterday

is in the altered circumstances of today the hall-mark of a gentleman. If you require me to salute you by force and if I submit to you, I will have demeaned myself in the eyes of the public and in your eyes as well as my own. But if I of my own accord salute you as a brother or fellow-man, that evinces my humility and righteousness....."

Someone wanted to know if it was true that he had sold the community to Smuts for £ 15,000? But no one took much notice of this Pathan, and finally the meeting ratified the settlement with only one or two dissentients. Gandhi got home at nearly 3 a.m. and without daring to sleep he waited for 7 a.m., when he could be at the prison gates to welcome his friends. There was a happy reunion, and for a day or two celebrations were held. But there were differences and dissension and jealousies among the Indians now that the struggle seemed over. Still the majority hung together, only a few Pathans offering formidable opposition.

Registration day was fixed as February 10, 1908. The Indian leaders had decided to set an example by registering early on the first day. But when Gandhi arrived at the offices of the Satyagraha Association he found a dissentient Pathan, Mir Alam, and one or two others posted by the door. They exchanged greetings, but Gandhi noticed the anger in the other man's eyes and knew that there was going to be trouble. The Pathans followed his small party until they were quite near the Registration Office and then closed in. "Where are you going," Mir Alam demanded. "I propose to take out a certificate of registration," said Gandhi, "if you will go with me I will first get you a certificate . . . and then I will take one for myself . . ."

Without another word the Pathan struck with a heavy cudgel and Gandhi collapsed under a rain of blows and kicks. When he came to himself he was lying in an office and the Rev. Joseph Doke was bending over him anxiously. "Where is Mir Alam?" "Arrested, along with the others." "They should be released." Doke became firm. The first thing was to decide what was to be done for Gandhi himself. Would he go to hospital or to Doke's own house? Gandhi accepted his friend's offer but he demanded of the Registrar, who had come upon the scene, that he should be the first to register. He would not wait for medical attention, and Mr. Chamney went post haste for the necessary

papers. He next insisted on wiring the Attorney-General not to prosecute Mir Alam and the others.

The doctor stitched up wounds in Gandhi's cheek and on the upper lip, prescribed treatment for the damaged ribs, and insisted on silence until the stitches were removed.

As soon as he had gone Gandhi demanded writing material, and sent an emphatic letter to the Chairman of the Satyagraha Association. Those who had committed the assault were trying to redress what they felt to be a wrong in the only manner they knew. No steps must be taken against them. They were Moslems, and Hindus might find in that fact an additional cause for resentment. But "rather let the blood spilt today cement the two communities indissolubly—such is my heartfelt prayer. May God grant it."

Chamney returned with the papers. It cost Gandhi a great effort to give the required finger-prints, the pain was severe. The Registrar looked on with tears in his eyes.

Then at last he could rest. Once more he took up pencil and paper. Would Mr. Doke's little daughter Olive sing for him his favourite English hymn? So the little girl stood by the door singing in a low voice '*Lead Kindly Light*', and in the shaded room the spare figure of the Indian lawyer relaxed and slept.

There were two reasons why Gandhi found it necessary to go to Durban as soon as he was well enough to do so. His family living at Phoenix were anxious to see him and to reassure themselves as to his health; and Natal Indians were inclined to be critical of the settlement. Their opinion mattered. The Transvaal Indians were really struggling on behalf of all Indians in South Africa. If the battle was lost in Transvaal it would soon be lost in Natal also.

A public meeting was arranged in Durban, and Gandhi was warned beforehand to expect trouble. He would neither abandon the meeting nor take any steps to protect himself. All went well until the meeting was nearly over and then suddenly a Pathan armed with a heavy cudgel leaped towards the platform and simultaneously all the lights were extinguished. There was a melee on the platform and someone fired a blank shot from a pistol to add to the confusion. But Rustomji had kept his head, and within a few minutes he was back with Superintendent Alexander's police who escorted Gandhi to Rustomji's house.

Gandhi must have remembered that other night when the European mob had surrounded old Rustomji's house, bent on murder. This time he was in danger from his own countrymen, and the British were his protectors. True they had accepted with alacrity his plea that the European assailants should not be prosecuted and without any sense of inconsistency had had prosecuted Mir Alam despite even more emphatic pleas from the victim; but there was no doubting the sincerity of their desire to protect him now.

Next day Gandhi met representatives of the Pathans and tried to conciliate them, without success. He left for the Phoenix Settlement the same day, accompanied by a polite but determined bodyguard who could not be persuaded to leave him. The leader of the self-appointed bodyguard, one Jack Moodaley was a trained boxer, said to be a match for any man in South Africa, white or coloured. No one disputed his claim on that day. The prophet of non-violence and the benevolent bruisers reached their destination without incident.

There was another occasion on which Gandhi's life was in peril and on which no providential black-out and no bodyguard stood between him and the danger. Mrs. Polak relates the incident in her little book of reminiscences.

Gandhi had addressed a large meeting in Johannesburg and when it was over he spoke to a few people and then walked out with Mrs. Polak. "As we reached the outer door I noticed a man standing in the shadow of the porch. Mr. Gandhi also specially noticed him, it was evident, for he went directly to him and linked his arm in the man's, saying something in a quiet, earnest voice to him. The man hesitated for one moment, then turned and walked away with Mr. Gandhi, I meantime keeping my place on the other side of him. We walked the length of the street. I did not understand what the others were talking about, even could I have heard it. But I could not hear, for both men were speaking in a very low voice. At the end of the street the man handed something over to Mr. Gandhi and walked away. I was somewhat puzzled by the whole proceeding and, as soon as the man had gone, I asked Mr. Gandhi what was the matter. 'What did the man want—anything special?' I queried. 'Yes,' replied Mr. Gandhi, 'he wanted to kill me.'" Mrs. Polak thought the man must be mad, but Gandhi corrected her. "No, he is not mad,

only mistaken; and you saw, after I had talked to him, he handed over to me the knife he had intended to use on me." "It is finished," he said a moment later, "I do not think the man will attempt to injure me again. Had I had him arrested I should have made an enemy of him. As it is, he will now be my friend."

General Smuts did not repeal the Black Act. He proposed to enforce it, in effect treating those who had registered voluntarily as having already complied with its conditions. The Committee was sardonic. They had foreseen exactly this contingency and Gandhi had led them into the trap. What next? The next thing, as always for Gandhi, was to plead, to reason, to negotiate. But all those efforts were unavailing. Finally Gandhi prepared, for drastic action. Certificates were collected as widely as possible, and an ultimatum was sent to General Smuts. In the terms of the agreement, the Indians begged that the Black Act should be repealed by a certain date. Otherwise the agreement would terminate and the certificates which had been taken out voluntarily would be destroyed.

On the day that the ultimatum expired, August 16th 1908, the grounds of the Mosque at Johannesburg were filled with Indians. Thirteen months before it had been the Government's ultimatum to register that was expiring as they met together. This time it was their ultimatum to the Government which had expired.

It was an impressive scene. There were careful explanations and resolutions. Gandhi insisted on offering any Indian the opportunity of receiving back his certificate if he had altered his mind since handing it in. No one stood up. Then a man rose and came forward. It was Mir Alam. He said he had done wrong to assault Gandhi and he handed over his original papers to be burned, as he had not taken out a voluntary certificate. Before the meeting the two men clasped hands, and in their action, was the symbol of the reunited community, determined and resolute to renew the struggle.

So 2,000 certificates were burned in a large cauldron and as the smoke rolled upwards others came forward to drop in their certificates. In a few minutes all that was left of the tortuous policy of General Smuts was a whirl of black ashes and a smudge of smoke against the sky. The European reporters were profoundly impressed. Some of the thoughtful recalled the Boston



Tea Party and became still more thoughtful.

The next round in the struggle opened uneventfully. General Smuts carried through the Legislature another Act, restricting immigration. Normally new grievances would have found no place in the Satyagraha, because Gandhi regarded it as a principle not to go one inch beyond the original demand for which the campaign is begun, unless new issues arise directly from the struggle. In this case the Black Act itself was involved. The new Act prohibited immigrants, even if they passed a test in a European language, if they were not eligible for registration under the Black Act.

Again Gandhi tried reason, without success. Smuts asserted that the Indian was raising a fresh issue, accused him of 'cunning' and warned the Indian community against him. So, Sorabji, an educated young Parsi was selected, and on the appointed day he entered the Transvaal. The police were somewhat embarrassed and allowed Sorabji to reach Johannesburg. Then some days later, on July 19th 1908, Sorabji was summoned and directed to leave Transvaal within seven days. On the 20th he was sentenced to one month's imprisonment. But still the Government hesitated to act against the local Indians who, having no certificates, were no more entitled in law to remain in Transvaal than Sorabji who had all the other qualifications for residence.

A further 'invasion' followed. About a dozen picked Indians, including Rustomji and Sheth Daud Mahomed, entered Transvaal in August and were at once deported. They returned three days later and were finally sentenced to three month's imprisonment in lieu of a fine of £ 50.

Now the Transvaal Indians found means to join their friends in gaol. Some traded without a licence—which could have been obtained only by showing the certificates they had burned – and some walked over the border and on returning to the frontier committed the 'offence' of entering Transvaal without having a certificate to show. The number of prisoners grew. In Volksrust jail alone there were seventy-five Indians and for a while Gandhi was among them. But soon he was removed to Pretoria jail where he was confined alone in a solitary cell, kept for dangerous prisoners, being taken out only for short exercise periods.

The jails were overfull, and the Government began to grow desperate. They tried deportation, but it proved completely

farcical. The Indians who were escorted a mile or two over the Transvaal border found their way back in a few hours and the Government was made to look ridiculous. So they resolved on the desperate expedient of shipping a large batch of prisoners to India. Clearly this was an illegal action, since the Transvaal government could not justly keep men in custody beyond the borders of the territory they governed. But they did it. There was strong comment in India and this with the appeals of the Indians in South Africa finally led the Transvaal Government to cease the practice. Satyagraha was beginning to show its strength. General Smuts was finding that the only way to defend his position was by further acts of injustice which brought upon him unpleasant consequences and loss of prestige both in his own country and abroad.

Gandhi and Sheth Haji Habib sailed from Cape Town in June 1909 on a second deputation to England. Smuts and others were already there discussing a possible union of the African colonies which could only result in concerted measures against the Indians.

At the end of the negotiations Lord Amthill came to the Indians and said that General Botha offered them some of their minor demands, but refused to remove the colour bar which had been set up as the law of the land. He advised them to take the practical relief and to give up the principle for the time. Perhaps later on they might fight for it, but at the moment it was hopeless.

Haji Habib spoke first, with Gandhi his interpreter. He would accept General Botha's offer; he spoke as representing the conciliation party and those who held the major portion of the community's wealth.

Then Gandhi spoke his own mind: "My colleague is right when he says that he represents a numerically and financially stronger section. The Indians for whom I speak are comparatively poor and inferior in numbers, but they are resolute unto death. They are fighting not only for the practical relief but for the principle as well. If they must give up either of the two, they will jettison the former and fight for the latter. We have an idea of General Botha's might, but we attach still greater weight to our pledge, and therefore we are ready to face the worst in the act of abiding by it. We will be patient in the confidence that if we stick to our solemn resolution, God in whose name we have made it will see to its fulfilment."

In November 1909 Gandhi sailed back to South Africa to renew the struggle. On the voyage, his mind full of his conversations in London with anarchical Indian nationalists and astute English politicians, he wrote *Hind Swaraj*—Indian Home Rule. These dialogues were published serially in *Indian Opinion* and afterwards in book form and in translations from the original Gujarati into English. *Hind Swaraj* contains all the essential principles of Gandhi's religious and political faith, reduced to practice. It is probably the best-known of his writings and has run into many editions.

He first considers the Indian political scene. Young nationalists, seething with discontent over the Partition of Bengal and the flouting of Indian public opinion, would denounce the patriarchal Indian statesmen and their counsels of moderation. Gandhi shows that these same veterans in fact made it possible for the younger generation to preach nationalism. The branch may not repudiate the trunk.

He does not therefore accept the cautious counsels of the elders. He sees in the Partition the shock which will awaken India to a realisation that pious resolutions and memorials alone will not alter the policy of the British. Some mighty force must stand behind the spoken words to compel justice if justice is not yielded to earnest pleading.

But what is the objective of the Nationalists? What is Home Rule? Does India ask only for the same form and mode of Government but in Indian hands instead of English? If so, Gandhi argues, they want the tiger's nature but not the tiger. They would make not Hindustan but *Englishtan*. This is not Self-rule, not Swaraj.

Why not copy England? Because the condition of England is pitiable. The English Parliament is only a talking-shop, prostituted to the sectional interests of Party. The English public sucks in its opinions from unscrupulous newspapers. But these are not faults peculiar to England. Her condition and that of all Europe is the same. The disease is the same. It is the so-called 'civilisation' under which the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day.

Why is European civilisation so great an evil? In a word, because it makes bodily welfare the object of life. In supplying bodily needs, fresh appetites are created and encouraged, man

becomes more and more dependent on the endless variety of comforts. Thus seeking to increase bodily comfort it fails miserably, even in that object. To keep going this inferno, the factory system is developed, and women and children as well as men are enslaved and worked to death. Now they even begin to deny religion. This civilisation is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed.

If this is so, objects the questioner, how has England been able to take and hold India? The question leads Gandhi to an examination of the condition of India. He concludes that England took, and holds India, only because Indians helped them to do so, because Indians quarrelled among themselves and allowed their weaknesses to be exploited by the imperial power. India's weakness, not England's strength, is the reason. He then strives to show that English rule has not benefited India. Instead of developing Indian civilisation it has sought to impose the deadly 'civilisation' of Europe, railways, law-courts, economic slavery.

What then is true civilisation? True civilisation, as the Gujarati word for it suggests, is "good conduct." Happiness is largely a mental condition. The simple life of the peasant, using his limbs and his muscle in natural and healthy work, undistracted by the false clamour of the machine and the lies of Press and politicians, resulted in more right conduct, more happiness. Many blemishes there are in India's culture, and they must be removed. But she has as much to teach other nations as she has to learn from them..

The objective, then, is not simply to persuade the English to hand over the powers of Government to Indians, but to purge Indian civilisation of all that is evil in 'modern civilisation', as well as of what mars her own traditional culture. How is this to be done? Not, Gandhi avers, by violent revolution. "As is the God, so is the votary." There is the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree. To sow the wind is to reap the whirlwind. Those who would save true civilisation must never resort to brute force. They must rely upon its antithesis which is not no force at all but the force of united, determined and peaceful people. Such people must act with goodwill, seek agreement, refrain from violence, fraud and secrecy. But rather than submit to injustice they will refuse co-operation, break evil laws,

suffer imprisonment or violence without retaliation. This is truth-force, or soul-force. It is Satyagraha, holding on to Truth. The belief that, ultimately, the power of suffering will, where the cause is just, bring victory at last over all the powers of evil, of darkness, of violence. This force is the most overwhelming force on earth. Mankind lives not by the wars of which its history is composed, but by the normal loving kindness of its millions, the very material on which the pattern of violence is stamped. Satyagraha organises and concentrates the very life-force in us. Violence organises only its aberration.

But the discipline of voluntary suffering is a stern discipline, and an effective safeguard against the wrong use of these sacred means for selfish ends. It is not the discipline imposed from without, but the discipline from within. It is the instrument of the self-ruled, those who are fit to rule themselves, fit for Swaraj. Self-Government for a nation is not a matter of constitution only. The machinery of Government may be used well or ill. Those who have won self-government through self-rule may be trusted to use it well. This is the Swaraj of the individual and of the nation to which, Gandhi concludes, his life is henceforth dedicated.

### CHAPTER III

## THE TRIUMPH OF SATYAGRAHA

GANDHI's mind was clear when he stepped ashore at Cape Town. He had stated his faith. He could publish the little book, week by week in *Indian Opinion* and it would be an inspiration to those who still fought with him. But how was the fight to be maintained? If large numbers were to go to jail, the problem of assistance to their dependents would become grave, particularly now that the wealthier elements of the community were tired of the struggle and disposed to take what terms they could get.

What was wanted was somewhere for the campaigners to live together cheaply and naturally. There was Phoenix, of course, but that was 300 miles away from Johannesburg, and was out of the question. So he found a farm of 1,100 acres near Lawley, twenty-one miles from Johannesburg, and one of his staunch European friends, Kallenbach, bought it and gave it over free for the use of the Satyagrahis for as long as they wanted it. They called it Tolstoy Farm.

In May 1910 Gandhi was on Tolstoy Farm, building, baking, teaching, healing, and directing the struggle. For two years while there was no important clash, the work of building and teaching and growing food, and experimenting in all directions went on at the Farm, and there Gandhi received in September 1910 a long letter from the great Russian after whom it was named.

Gandhi had written to Tolstoy and received a short reply in March 1910. In April Gandhi writing from Johannesburg sent Tolstoy *Indian Home Rule*, and Tolstoy acknowledged it in May, and spoke also of being much attracted by the biographical sketch of Gandhi which Doke had written. In September, after reading some issues of *Indian Opinion*, the old Russian wrote of his faith in the way of life to supplant military force and violence. "Your work in the Transvaal," he wrote, "which to us seems to be at the end of the earth, is yet in the centre of our interest and supplies the most weighty practical proof, in which the world can now share, and not only the Christian but

all the peoples of the world can participate."

In October 1912 Gokhale came to South Africa. He was an important Indian statesman and the Europeans treated him as such. He travelled in special trains, and in the Mayor of Johannesburg's car. He was presented with addresses, and spoke to large crowds and to packed meetings. There was a great banquet of four hundred in his honour. At Pretoria he met General Botha and General Smuts. After a two hours' discussion he came to Gandhi saying, "You must return to India in a year. Everything has been settled. The Black Act will be repealed. The racial bar will be removed from the immigration law. The £3 tax will be abolished." In November Gokhale left South Africa.

General Smuts, as Gandhi had anticipated, kept none of these promises. Thus the question of the £3 tax became also part of the Satyagraha struggle, with the important consequence that the indentured Indians became involved in it.

When all this was reported to Gokhale in India he was deeply pained. He cabled to Gandhi asking the maximum and minimum strength he could count on in the new situation. "Sixty-five or sixty-six at the highest, at the least sixteen," Gandhi replied, and despite Gokhale's doubts as to the possibility of renewing the struggle with such a pitiful handful of men, he began to make his plans. With so small a force it was not necessary to maintain Tolstoy Farm, and Phoenix became the centre of operations.

In March 1913 the Cape Supreme Court dealt the final blow to the Indian community by a judgment which nullified by one stroke of the pen all marriages celebrated according to the Hindu, Moslem, and Zoroastrian rites. Thus all the Indian women ceased to be wives and ranked only as concubines, and their children were deprived of the right to inherit any property of their parents.

Even now Gandhi's patience held out. He wrote politely to the Government asking if the judgment was upheld and if so, if the law might be amended to recognise the validity of Indian marriages consecrated according to the religious customs of the parties and recognised as legal in India. The Government would do nothing.

Gandhi arranged for two groups to court arrest. No names were to be disclosed until the accused appeared in court. Almost

all of the little band from Phoenix thus courted arrest by entering the Transvaal, and were sentenced to three months' imprisonment in September 1913. A band of women, who had previously courted arrest unsuccessfully, crossed from the Transvaal into Natal, but again were not arrested. Mrs. Gandhi had loyally insisted on being included in this party. The women went on to Newcastle where their story created such an impression among the indentured workers that the Government was forced to act, and the women also were thrown into jail for three months. These arrests only increased the concern of the Indian mine-workers at Newcastle who threw down their tools and marched in crowds into the city.

Gandhi hurried from Phoenix to Newcastle. He addressed the strikers, urging them to leave their homes, bringing only the clothes they wore and a blanket, and to follow him. After eight long years the crisis was at hand. Gandhi had no illusions about his men—they were a rough army, including some who had been to jail for murder, theft and adultery. But they had been caught up by this sense of intolerable wrong; they were Indians ready to fight for India, and they would follow him. It was enough. The Transvaal border was 36 miles from Newcastle. Gandhi with his two thousand followers began to move forward across the Drakensburg Mountains, men, women and children marching unarmed towards the jails of the Transvaal to share the lot of the imprisoned few who were the symbol of the community.

There was no mob-oratory. Gandhi had explained the risks, the difficulties and the hardships, told them they were still free to return to work if they chose. He had spoken with the mine-owners in Durban, too, but without finding a way out of the deadlock. The motley army marched on October 28th 1913. Among those who followed them to Charlestown were two mothers with young babies in their arms. One baby died of exposure on the march. The other fell from its mother's arms in crossing a river and was drowned. But the mothers marched on. From Charlestown where the march halted Gandhi wrote to the Government explaining the object of the demonstration, and asking as a condition of calling off the strike that the £3 tax should be repealed. He would not ask the workers to join the general struggle directed against the other grievances. He



resolved that, if the marchers were not arrested, they would make for Tolstoy Farm and there encamp.

On November 5th, 1913 Gandhi telephoned to General Smuts from Charlestown to ask if he was willing to revoke the £3 tax. He was curtly refused permission to converse with his opponent. So at dawn the following morning after prayers the march began again, 2,037 men, 127 women, and 57 children.

Two days earlier at the border town of Volksrust the Europeans had held an angry meeting. There were threats to fire on the Indians if they attempted to enter Transvaal. Kallenbach was there alone but he stood up without hesitation to rebuke the meeting and to state the Indians' case. Another European at once challenged him to a duel, but he calmly answered, "As I have accepted the religion of peace, I may not accept the challenge. Let him who will come and do his worst with me. But I will continue to claim a hearing at this meeting." They heard him out after that and afterwards Kallenbach and his challenger became firm friends. The peaceful courage which had won over Gandhi's intended assassin had served his European friend equally well. The way through Volksrust was clear.

The border of Transvaal was about one mile beyond Charlestown. When the marchers came in sight of it they found a small patrol of mounted police drawn up on duty at the border gate. Gandhi halted his men and advanced alone, leaving instructions with his 'army' to cross over when he gave the signal. But while he was still talking with the police the pilgrims made a sudden rush and crossed the border. The police did not attempt to arrest them and soon Gandhi had restored order and the procession marched forward into Transvaal.

On the first night the marchers reached Palmford, eight miles beyond Volksrust. The women were exhausted, and Gandhi saw them lodged with an Indian shopkeeper who promised to send them on to Tolstoy Farm if the marchers reached there, and to their homes if the marchers were arrested.

When all his men were asleep and Gandhi himself was preparing to rest he heard footsteps approaching and saw a European, lantern in hand, coming towards him. It was a police officer who had a warrant to arrest him and take him to Volksrust. Gandhi aroused a lieutenant and quickly acquainted him with the position. The pilgrims were not to be awakened before morn-

ing. At daybreak they must resume the march.

In the court at Volksrust next morning the public prosecutor had to ask for a remand since he was not ready with his evidence. Gandhi asked for bail, and the prosecutor opposed the request, but in vain. There was no ground on which the Court was entitled to refuse it, and the Magistrate released Gandhi. He was rushed by Kallenbach to a waiting car and driven back to the marchers who greeted their leader with transports of joy and enthusiasm.

The march continued and reached Standerton, and there Gandhi was again arrested, this time by the Magistrate himself. When he reached the Court he found that five of his principal lieutenants had also been arrested. But again the prosecutor wanted a remand and again despite strong opposition to the request Gandhi was granted bail. His colleagues remained in custody, but Gandhi was free to lead his ragged army on the last stage of their journey.

On November 9th the marchers reached Terkworth on the route to Greylingstad, and here Polak came to consult with Gandhi. He had been summoned to India by Gokhale to give a first-hand account of the struggle and, risking arrest, he had come to take final instructions from Gandhi. The two men walked together at the head of the whole body of pilgrims, striving to finish their business in time for Polak to catch the evening train for Durban. While they were still talking, a party of Europeans and police arrived and Gandhi was placed under arrest for the third time in four days. His other chief workers had been left in jail in Standerton. There was only one thing to do. Polak must take charge. They had barely exchanged two sentences when Gandhi was hustled into the Cape cart and driven away at full speed.

The scene shows how far the Government had come to rely upon Gandhi's ability to keep his followers from violence. Here in the lonely veldt was an army of two thousand homeless Indians deliberately and conscientiously breaking the law. And the Government sent one policeman to arrest their leader knowing that he would come peacefully and counsel his followers to keep the peace. How could feeling be worked up against such saintly rebels? How could Government avoid looking rather absurd?

The marchers halted for the night at Greylingstad and then advanced to Balfour near Johannesburg where they found three special trains drawn up to deport the whole body of them to Natal. They demanded that Gandhi should be brought to them. If he advised it they would allow themselves to be arrested, and would board the trains.\* But they would not do it to please Mr. Chamney, the Principal Immigration Officer, who had seen Gandhi lodged at Heidelberg and then hastened back to Balfour. So Mr. Chamney was reduced to approaching Polak and Kachhalia Sheth to ask for their assistance in arresting their followers. This the Satyagraha leaders willingly gave. As they spoke to the large crowd, begging the men to accept arrest and enter the trains as Gandhi had wished them to do, the situation must have been at once impressive and ridiculous. Polak, Kachhalia, and the miners were in deadly earnest. They were endeavouring to put Satyagraha to the test on a large scale. But Mr. Chamney's position could scarcely have been more ludicrous or embarrassing. The crowd was at last persuaded and all entrained peacefully. Polak was not arrested, and Chamney assured him that the Government had no intention of detaining him. But the Government, learning that Polak was about to sail to India to tell his story there, thought otherwise. He was arrested while waiting for his train at Charlestown and to make certain that Kallenbach should not take his place, he too, was arrested at Volksrust. When this news reached Mrs. Polak she prepared to set out for India herself in her husband's place, leaving him to Gandhi's care. It was a plucky action. Fortunately she was stopped before leaving Africa by a message from Gokhale. He was sending C.F. Andrews, a man who was to become one of Gandhi's most intimate and best-loved friends.

Meanwhile Gandhi had been refused bail—he had asked for it in ignorance of the fate of his army—and was taken to Dundee to be charged with inducing indentured labourers to leave the province of Natal. On this charge he was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment with hard labour. But he must still stand a second trial at Volksrust on the charge of aiding and abetting prohibited persons to enter Transvaal.

At Volksrust he was joined in jail by Kallenbach and Polak. Again the position was farcical. The court could not

convict on a plea of guilty without evidence, and the police could not easily find witnesses. They therefore sought Gandhi's aid! Gandhi obligingly provided witnesses against himself. The same difficulty arose about Polak and Kallenbach. Gandhi provided the evidence against Kallenbach also, by agreement with that amiable friend, and appeared for the Crown. He was also witness against Polak. Thus the three friends were convicted and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

For a few days they were together in Volksrust jail. New prisoners were constantly arriving, among them an old man of seventy-five, Harbatsinh. He was an ex-indentured man who had voluntarily joined the struggle.

"Why are you in?" Gandhi asked, "I have not invited old men like yourself to court jail."

"How could I help it," replied Harbatsinh, "when you, your wife and even your boys went to jail for our sake?"

"But you will not be able to endure the hardships of jail life. I would advise you to leave the jail. Shall I arrange for your release?"

"No, please. I will never leave jail. I must die one of these days, and how happy should I be to die in a jail."

Gandhi could argue no further with this wise, illiterate old man. He learnt later that Harbatsinh died in Durban jail on January 5th 1914.

The Government was uneasy at the possibilities of discussion among the prisoners at Volksrust and they resolved to separate the leaders. Kallenbach was taken to Pretoria, Polak to Germiston. Gandhi was sent to Bloemfontein jail where there were no other Indian prisoners. He had had no time to study at leisure since 1893 and the prospect of a year in solitude filled him not with terror but with joy.

At this decisive point in the struggle the Government made a fatal mistake. They adopted a policy which dramatised the grievance of the Indians and demonstrated exactly what the struggle was directed against.

The marchers had been deported into Natal—they were not even fed on the way—and there prosecuted and jailed. But instead of shutting them up in prisons the Government devised what they considered a most ingenious plan. They realised

that to keep thousands of labourers in jail was costly and that the mines would be forced to close during the whole period of the sentences. If such a state of affairs continued they would soon find themselves obliged to repeal the £3 tax. So the Government surrounded the mines with wire, proclaimed the mine compounds as out-stations to the jails, appointed the mine-owners' staffs as warders, and forced the labourers, to work. Previously the workers would have been prosecuted in the civil courts if they had deserted the mines. Now they were to be treated as slaves who could be brought back by brute force if necessary.

The miners refused to return to work. They were brutally flogged, kicked and insulted. Still they held out. Cablegrams reached Gokhale and he succeeded in arousing India to the desperate situation of his compatriots in South Africa.

Then in December 1913 Lord Hardinge made in Madras a speech which was not only a public criticism, in most severe terms, of the South African Government, but a wholehearted defence of the Satyagrahis and endorsement of their civil disobedience to unjust and envidious legislation. The Satyagrahis had appealed to the conscience of the Empire and the conscience had answered not from among the Europeans in Africa, but through the Viceroy of India!

Meanwhile on the coast of Natal, where the largest numbers of Indian workers were employed, thousands came out on strike in protest against the brutal treatment of their fellows in the mines. Still the Government would not yield. They resorted now to sheer terrorism. Mounted military police chased strikers and dragged them back to their work. The slightest disturbance on the part of the labourers was answered by rifle fire. When a body of strikers refused to be forced back to work and some threw a few stones, firing wounded many and killed several. Gandhi's volunteers were actually engaged in attempts to check and control the strikes, realising that if the whole sixty thousand left work it would be impossible to maintain such a large number. One of these volunteers was Sorabji, the eighteen-year old son of Gandhi's Parsi friend, Rustomji. At Verulam where many labourers had refused to return to work General Lukin was about to order his troops to open fire when Sorabji seized the reins of his horse. "You must not order firing. I under-

take to induce my people peacefully to return to work." The General held back and the young man was as good as his word.

But the illegal violence of the military who treated strike action in Natal as though it was a crime, continued unabated. It taught Gandhi a lesson he always remembered. Governments never hesitated to break their own laws if it suited them to do so. Yet within six months of firing these murderous volleys the Government repealed the £3 tax which was the cause of the disturbances. Had they yielded to reason they might have saved many lives— and something of their own reputation.

"I observed in this struggle," Gandhi wrote later, "that its end drew nearer as the distress of the fighters became more intense, and as the innocence of the distressed grew clearer. I also saw that in such a pure, unarmed and non-violent struggle, the very kind of material required for its prosecution, be it men, money or munition, is forthcoming at the right moment."

The survivors of Gandhi's little group were at Phoenix. Mr. West was looking after the English section of *Indian Opinion*, Miss West and Maganlal Gandhi were there. Soon West was arrested also although he had committed no offence. Attention had been focussed on the little settlement by the visits of hundreds of labourers from the coast who had come there for advice or shelter.

But Andrews was coming, and Willie Pearson with him. It was known to some of them that Andrews at a meeting in Lahore in support of the Satyagrahis had given all the money he possessed to help their cause. Gokhale had chosen well.

Before these unofficial ambassadors arrived the Government was looking for a solution. There was no doubt in anyone's mind about the facts, but General Smuts nevertheless appointed a commission of three persons to make recommendations. The Indians refused to deal with the commission unless the Satyagrahi prisoners were first released and the Indians were represented on the commission by at least one member. So in December 1913, after scarcely six weeks' imprisonment, the Government ordered the unconditional release of Gandhi, Kallenbach and Polak. They also released West, against whom they had no case. When Andrews and Pearson reached Durban they were astonished to find Gandhi, Polak and Kallenbach

waiting there to welcome them. Gandhi now met Andrews for the first time.

Gandhi addressed a letter from Durban to General Smuts. He objected to the appointment to the commission of enquiry of two noted anti-Indian Europeans, and suggested the names of more impartial Europeans who would command the confidence of both sides. He asked that all the Satyagrahi prisoners should be released. "If this is not done, it would be difficult," he wrote, "for us to remain outside jail." If they were, to tender evidence before the commission they should be allowed to visit the mines and factories where the indentured labourers were. If these requests were not granted, they would again court arrest.

The reply seemed to give no hope and Gandhi mobilised a fresh band of Indians to march from Durban on January 1st, 1914. Meanwhile he sought an interview with General Smuts and on obtaining it postponed his march for several days.

When Gokhale heard of the fresh march that was contemplated he was disturbed and cabled to Gandhi advising him to give it up. Gandhi consulted his colleagues and persuaded them that, painful as the dilemma was, they could not retreat from their original pledge on which the entire struggle was based.

At this moment a great strike suddenly broke out quite independently among the European employees of the Union railways. Many of the Indians were elated at this good fortune and urged Gandhi to lead the march at once. Gandhi now rose to the height of his genius and showed unmistakably the spirit in which he had endeavoured to conduct the whole campaign. Cheated, imprisoned, assaulted, his followers bludgeoned, shot, flogged and enslaved, he remained a Satyagrahi, he kept his grip on his conception of Truth and still steered by his unconquerable goodwill.

The Indians, he decided, were not out to embarrass the Government. They would wait until the railway strike was settled. Then, if necessary, they would march. It was not the force of strike action on which they relied for success, but the power of voluntary suffering in a just cause. This, if necessary, they would display unflinchingly and to the death.

The decision created a sensation. Reuter cabled the news to England, and Lord Ampthill sent his congratulations. To

Gandhi and Andrews who had gone to Pretoria for the consultations one of the General's secretaries remarked: "I do not like your people, and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands on you? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And this is what reduces us to sheer helplessness." General Smuts said very much the same.

This was by no means the first instance of the generosity of the Satyagrahis. When the Indian labourers on the north coast of Natal were on strike and great losses would have been incurred if the sugar-cane that had been cut was not brought to the mill and crushed, twelve hundred Indians returned to work to complete this job and only rejoined their compatriots when it was done.

Again, when the Indian employees of the Durban Municipality struck work, those who were engaged in the sanitary services or as attendants for the patients in the hospitals were sent back and willingly continued to do their duties.

Gandhi saw Smuts alone. The European railway strike was at its height, and the workmen were not only demanding higher wages but aimed at getting control of the Government as well. There was no question now of the General refusing to discuss the question as he had refused before when a march had been planned and announced.

Smuts would not concede Gandhi's demand that an Indian should sit with the commission; that would be "derogatory to the Government's prestige". He realised that Gandhi would not give evidence before the commission in such circumstances but still he hinted the commission would decide as the Government wanted them to decide. Of course, if the Indians would not testify, the charges they had brought against police and military would remain unproved, but that was for them to think over. Smuts did not deny the anti-Indian bias of individual members of the commission. But after all anti-Indian feeling was very prevalent. It would carry more weight if such Europeans decided in favour of the Indians' claims.



Gandhi persuaded the Indians to let the commission do its work unhampered. They would not co-operate as they were unrepresented. But they would not attempt to hinder it

The commission recommended compliance without delay with all the main demands of the Indian community. The £3 tax should be repealed. The Indian marriages should be validated. Suitable measures should be taken to recognise the right of the Indian settlers to enter the Union as soon as their identity was established.

Soon the appropriate legislation, an Indian Relief Act, was passed by the Union Parliament. The Act abolished the £3 tax, recognised Indian marriages, and secured rights of citizenship to Indians admitted to the Union and holding domicile certificates.

To Gandhi, the passing of the Act marked the end of the struggle. Some were dubious. They recalled that the Government had tricked them before, and they feared it might happen again. To that Gandhi had an answer. If there was more trouble in the future then there must be Satyagrahis to meet it. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. No generation could secure liberty for its descendants. Each might have to fight the battle afresh.

There were still minor grievances which had not been remedied, and Gandhi in a letter to General Smuts listed several of these points on which the Indians would one day expect reform. But the honour of the community was secured and the principal objectives had been achieved. At last Gandhi's work in South Africa was done and he was free to go.

He left Cape Town on 18th July 1914. Mrs. Polak wrote that they were "paraded in carriages round the town preceded by a brass band which played a melody that I knew as 'We won't go home till morning' but which probably the musicians believed to be something quite different". At any rate there was no doubt about the enthusiasm, the love and gratitude of his countrymen, and the reluctant admiration of many Europeans.

So Gandhi left South Africa for the last time. He did not go directly to India. He came once more to England, and landed on August 6th 1914, two days after war had been declared.

## CHAPTER IV

### INDIA STIRS—THE LOCAL STRUGGLES

KALLENBACH sailed with Gandhi and his wife for England. He had been more than a loyal friend. He had shared with Gandhi, as far as he was able, the experiments in nature-cure, self-control, and simple living on Tolstoy Farm. But Kallenbach still had a weakness—for binoculars. Gandhi was not exactly censorious, perhaps he remembered his own failings. He had once come home from England with a £2 bottle of hair-restorer from the Hotel Cecil, an embarrassing possession which he had not liked to refuse to buy, but which none of his household in Johannesburg seemed to want. Gandhi tried gently to persuade Kallenbach that the possession of several pairs of expensive binoculars was not quite in keeping with their ideal of simplicity. "Rather than allow these to be a bone of contention between us, why not throw them into the sea, and be done with them?" he said. "Certainly throw the wretched things away," Kallenbach concurred. "I mean it," insisted Gandhi. "So do I," said Kallenbach firmly, and without further ado the Indian threw the binoculars overboard.

The incident is important in this narrative because it shows simply and on a small scale an attitude of Gandhi's which later on puzzled and worried many of his friends. Neither Andrews nor Tagore ever quite understood what Gandhi meant by his burning of foreign cloth in the Non-co-operation Campaign. The throwing away of Kallenbach's binoculars gives the clue. When an overstrong affection for material objects is a barrier to spiritual truth or a temptation to wrong action, it is not enough, Gandhi would say, to discard the offending articles. They may have to be destroyed before the eyes of their possessor who will find out in that moment to which his heart is loyal, to truth or to possessions. To demonstrate that all material things are worthless relative to certain eternal truths, you may have to dramatise it thus.

Gandhi thought that the Indians in England ought to do their bit in the war. Many of the Indians objected vigorously.

But at this time Gandhi still retained faith in the British system of government and he thought that the Indians should not exploit the situation to press their own nationalist claims. He advised them to volunteer, and wrote to Lord Crewe offering to organise the volunteers as an ambulance unit.

When the news got to South Africa, Polak was amazed. How could this possibly be consistent with Gandhi's belief in *ahimsa*, non-violence? He knew what Gandhi had done in the Boer War; but presumably he had changed his opinions since then? Gandhi gives an impressive answer to these criticisms in his autobiography. He is quite clear about the two main points: "When two nations are fighting, the duty of a votary of *ahimsa* is to stop the war," and "I make no distinction from the point of view of *ahimsa*, between combatants and non-combatants... those who confine themselves to attending to the wounded in battle cannot be absolved from the guilt of war." But "underlying *ahimsa* is the unity of all life, the error of one cannot but affect all, and hence man cannot be wholly free from *himsa* (violence). So long as he continues to be a social being, he cannot but participate in the *himsa* that the very existence of society involves."

What is essential is courage. "One cannot follow truth or love so long as one is subject to fear," he writes elsewhere. "Without courage there is no morality, no religion, no life." But courage may express itself in one of two ways. To "take part in war, and yet wholeheartedly try to free himself, his nation and the world from war" is one way, and in following that a man takes upon him his share of the violence inseparable from the modern state. The other way of courage is to resist war, to make an unflinching witness against the evil of war, the evil in society, the evil in one self, by refusing to co-operate in warlike measures and preparations. But who is worthy thus to be the conscience of society, and to cry out against man-made evil? That is a terrible question to rack the soul of any but the fool, the prig and the blind dogmatist. In some sense those who take that supreme responsibility must be dedicated persons with a realisation of the role they are undertaking. Strangely as Gandhi's phrasing sometimes falls on Western ears as he weighs this supreme moral problem, we seem to hear through it the more prosaic voice of our English Dr. Johnson: "A man

who only does what every one of the society to which he belongs would do, is not a dishonest man." What of a man who will not do what every one of the society to which he belongs is doing? He is a dishonest man—unless he is on the way to becoming a saint.

"It was quite clear to me," Gandhi writes, "that participation in war could never be consistent with *ahimsa*. But it is not always given to one to be equally clear about one's duty. A votary of truth is often obliged to grope in the dark."

However wise his advice to his countrymen, for Gandhi himself the decision was almost certainly the wrong one. He became ill with pleurisy and did not respond to treatment. Even from his sick-bed he became involved in a "miniature Satyagraha" with the military authorities whose ideas of discipline for the corps did not fit in with Gandhi's. His consolation was that Gokhale, whom he had come to England to see, had now come over from Paris, and Gandhi, Gokhale and Kallenbach had many long talks together. But at last it was clear that Gandhi must return to India if his health was to improve. The decision brought in its train a sad parting. Kallenbach had come to England in the hope of going with Gandhi to India to share his work there. But Kallenbach was German. Gandhi did his utmost to get a passport for his friend, even cabling to Lord Hardinge who replied, "Regret Government of India not prepared to take any such risk". So India was spared the risk of one simple, generous, fruitarian German pacifist and Gandhi lost his close friend. "Could he have come to India," Gandhi wrote years later, "he would have been leading today the simple, happy life of a farmer and weaver. Now he is in South Africa leading his old life and doing brisk business as an architect."

The voyage home was not eventful. Gandhi noticed that there was even less contact between the Europeans and Indians bound for India than between the two races on South African vessels but his thoughts were full of India and of the Phoenix party who were already there, at Shantiniketan, "the abode of peace", the famous settlement of Tagore. In Bombay, Gokhale had arranged receptions of welcome for Gandhi. At the Gujarati welcome the principal speaker made a short sweet speech in English. He was Mr. Jinnah. Gandhi diffidently entered a mild protest against the use of English at a Gujarati gathering

In India he preferred to speak the languages of his own people.

There were other parties and receptions, and before he left Bombay Lord Willingdon expressed a desire to see him, and invited Gandhi to come whenever there was anything important to discuss or any complaint about Government policy. After a visit to Poona Gandhi turned his face homewards to Porbandar. His brother had died but the widow and other relatives still lived in the little seacoast town where Mohandas was born.

The train halted at Viramgam. There was some sort of customs barrier as well as a routine health inspection. While he waited a young public worker, the tailor Motilal, came up and begged him to listen to complaints against the customs barrier. Gandhi was ill and tried to terminate the conversation. "Are you prepared to go to jail?" he asked. "We will certainly go to jail, provided you lead us," Motilal answered at once.

There were many more complaints about Viramgam, and Gandhi interested himself in the question and studied it carefully. When he had satisfied himself that the grievances were well founded he took advantage of the Governor of Bombay's offer to discuss any matters of complaint. Lord Willingdon agreed that if it had been his responsibility the cordon would have been long since removed. But it was a matter for the Government of India.

The Government of India would make no reply to Gandhi's representations beyond a brief acknowledgement, until he was at last able to meet Lord Chelmsford. Lord Chelmsford promised to remove the cordon and was as good as his word.

During Gandhi's negotiations with the Bombay Government there was a casual conversation between him and the Secretary that is worth mentioning here. The Secretary expressed disapproval of a speech in which Gandhi had referred to Satyagraha on this question.

"Is not this a threat," he asked, "and do you think a powerful Government will yield to threats?"

"This was no threat," Gandhi answered. "It was educating the people. It is my duty to place before the people all the legitimate remedies for grievances. A nation that wants to come into its own ought to know all the ways and means of

freedom. Usually they include violence as the last remedy. Satyagraha, on the other hand, is an absolutely non-violent weapon. I regard it as my duty to explain its practice and its limitations. I have no doubt that the British Government is a powerful Government, but I have no doubt also that Satyagraha is a sovereign remedy."

The Secretary put his head a little on one side. "We shall see," he said.

At Shantiniketan the Phoenix Party were well settled and Gandhi also had the company of Tagore, Andrews and Willie Pearson. He planned to stay there for some time and at the end of his first week was already discussing reforms with the staff when there arrived from Poona a telegram announcing Gokhale's death.

Gandhi left at once for Poona with his wife and Maganlal Gandhi who had been in charge of the Phoenix Party. Andrews came a little way with them. Both realised what the loss of the Indian statesman would mean. Gandhi would be at once deprived of his guidance and help and thrown into the front rank of Indian politics within a few months of returning to his native land. "Do you think," said Andrews finally, "that a time will come for Satyagraha in India? And if so, have you any idea when it will come?" "It is difficult to say. For one year I am to do nothing. For Gokhale took from me a promise that I should travel in India for gaining experience, and express no opinion on public questions until I have finished the period of probation. Even after the year is over I will be in no hurry to speak and pronounce opinions. And so I do not suppose, there will be any occasion for Satyagraha for five years or so."

For several months Gandhi wandered in India, visiting holy places and conversing with priests, merchants, beggars—the endless varieties of India's people. He travelled always as a third-class passenger, sharing the hardships of the poor, learning to understand them and their troubles. But in his mind was the projected ashram (retreat), and many were the invitations he received to settle his little community in this or that part of the land. Finally he chose Kochrab, a small village near Ahmedabad, and there founded the Satyagraha Ashram on May 25, 1915. The statement he wrote of the purpose of the Ashram and the vows prescribed for the little community are

a call to a life of virtue, simplicity and labour. The community was vowed to truth, to abstention from violence, celibacy, fearlessness, and strict self-control. They were to practise Swadeshi, to work through their surroundings and accept only what was offered by their immediate neighbourhood. The Ashram might well claim to follow the wisdom that Plato urged, "holding fast the path of moderation, and regarding poverty as the increase of a man's desires and not the diminution of his property".

The Ashram had been in existence only a few months when a crisis came. A friend recommended an untouchable family as eligible to join the Ashram. Gandhi at once accepted the little family of three into his household. The orthodox were troubled and angered. Financial help dwindled and ceased. Rumours of complete social boycott reached the Ashram, but Gandhi was unshaken. If means to maintain the community failed, he announced, they would go into the city and there live among the untouchables, supporting themselves by manual labour as best they could. At last the slender reserve was exhausted and Gandhi was preparing to leave his settlement when a wealthy gentleman almost unknown to him came and without asking a single question gave him 13,000 rupees to carry on the work. There has been misgivings inside the Ashram, too, about the admission of the untouchables, but these were also overcome. The Ashram was saved.

In March 1916, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council for the abolition of the indenture system, under which Indians were still being recruited for South African plantations. The Government promised abolition "in due course". Gandhi was disturbed. Was this another question which could be settled only by Satyagraha? He began to open discussions with some of the Indian leaders and to probe public opinion. In February 1917, the indenture system was still operating, and Malaviya asked leave to introduce a bill for the immediate abolition of the system. The Government refused permission.

Gandhi now began his work in earnest, touring the country to address mass meetings. Under his influence a definite demand was formulated. The indenture system was to be abolished by 31st July. Still travelling in third-class railway carriages,

dogged and pestered by C.I.D. men, Gandhi went from Bombay to Karachi, from Karachi to Calcutta. Before the 31st July arrived the Government announced that the system of indenture had been abolished. The resolute preparation for Satyagraha had moved the authorities to abandon their policy of delay and concede to the demand of the people.

Since the Congress session in 1916 Gandhi had been begged to visit Champaran to see for himself the abject condition of the workers on the indigo plantations. So from Calcutta he went to Bihar and there met Rajendra Prasad and a number of others who were ready to assist him in studying the problem and if need be, conducting the struggle.

Gandhi soon made contact with the Planters' Association and the local authorities. He was first advised to get out, and then when he set off to visit a tenant who had been ill-treated he was served with an order to leave the district at once. Gandhi replied politely that he was unable to obey the order as he considered himself entitled to investigate conditions in the neighbourhood and to advise those who might have grievances. He was at once summoned to appear in court on the following day and throughout the night he sat up writing letters and directions for his friends, so that they might carry on the work if he was imprisoned.

The court-room was packed with Indians, and the Europeans were plainly ill at ease. They had not expected Gandhi to stand against them. The Government pleader desired a postponement of the case, but Gandhi demurred. He pleaded guilty of disobeying the order to leave Champaran, and read a courteous and moderate statement of his reasons for feeling unable to abandon his work. The Magistrate uneasily postponed judgement. Meanwhile Gandhi wired full details of the position to the Viceroy and to Malaviya. If he was imprisoned now, the eyes of all India would be turned to the backward little district at the foot of the Himalayas. The very action would shout aloud the guilt of the Europeans and their frantic desire to prevent impartial inquiry. Before Gandhi could again appear in Court he received a message from the Magistrate. The Lieutenant Governor had ordered the case to be withdrawn. If Mr. Gandhi cared to proceed with his enquiry he might count on whatever help he might require from



the officials. The Champaran planters scarcely attempted to conceal their displeasure at this new development. They tried at once to stir up trouble by a whispering-campaign of evil rumours against Gandhi, which was defeated by his own candour.

The situation was delicate, and Gandhi's position difficult. Hewould not permit other Indian leaders to come to him, he begged newspapers not to send reporters, or stir up public opinion while his enquiry was in progress.

So the work went on. Day after day was spent in cross-examining witnesses and taking down detailed statements, attempting to meet and conciliate the planters and win them over to a fair view of the problem. Gandhi began to see that the condition of the peasants was so hopeless that apart from attempting to remedy the most flagrant economic injustices he must initiate some work of village reconstruction. Already he had many able helpers. Rajendra Prasad was there, and Kripalani. From the Ashram came his son Devadas, and others. Mahadev Desai, who was to be his secretary, his biographer, his companion for nearly thirty years came to throw in his lot with Gandhi. Teaching was begun and schools opened in six villages. Medical-relief - castor oil, quinine, sulphur ointment was undertaken. Sanitation was organised. Slowly the workers began to build the foundations of health and hope.

One day a letter came from the Bihar Government. Could not Mr. Gandhi now conclude his inquiry- and leave Bihar? Gandhi replied that the inquiry was necessarily a lengthy one and that until it resulted in bringing relief to the peasants he could not leave. But the Government might terminate it by accepting the peasants' grievances as genuine and redressing them, or by immediately instituting an official inquiry.

Gandhi was invited to meet the Lieutenant Governor who expressed willingness to appoint a committee of inquiry of which he asked Gandhi to be a member. Gandhi accepted, reserving the right to guide and advise the *ryots*, in case the result of the inquiry failed to satisfy him, and to be free to confer with his co-workers during the progress of the inquiries. Sir Edward Gait considered this reservation both just and proper, and the inquiry began under the chairmanship of Sir Frank Sly.

The Committee found in favour of the *ryots*. It recom-

mended that the planters should refund a portion of the exactions, which the Committee found to be unlawful and that the *tinkathia* system (under which the Champaran tenant was compelled to plant three out of every 20 parts of his land with indigo—for the landlord) should be abolished by law. A bill was passed in accordance with the Committee's recommendations. The planters offered strenuous opposition to the bill and it was largely due to the firmness of Sir Edward Gait that the recommendations of the Committee were carried out. The *tinkathia* system, which had persisted for about a century, was thus abolished within a few months. Gandhi had won his third important victory in India. But his thought was only of the peasants. He planned to continue the constructive work for some years, to establish more schools, to penetrate the villages. Before he had done more than finish his work on the Committee there came an urgent call from Ahmedabad, and another from Kheda.

In Kheda the crops had failed and the peasants were unable to pay their assessment. In Ahmedabad the mill-workers were agitating against low wages. Neither of these struggles could be properly supervised from a distance, but perhaps they might be rapidly disposed of, and then he would be free to return to Champaran.

Gandhi went first to Ahmedabad. The labourers' case, he found, was strong. He met the mill-owners and requested them to refer the dispute to arbitration. They refused, and Gandhi felt there was no alternative but to call a strike. He instructed the workers not to resort to violence, nor to molest blacklegs. They must not depend on alms, and above all they must remain firm no matter how long the strike continued, and earn their bread by honest labour.

For the first two weeks all went well, but then an angry attitude towards the blacklegs began to develop. Gandhi knew this for a sign of weakness and was not surprised to learn a few days later that the morale of the strikers was beginning to totter. One morning as he was addressing them, groping uncertainly for the right course, words came suddenly and unbidden to his lips. "Unless the strikers rally and continue the strike until a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether, I will not touch my food."

Three days after Gandhi had begun to fast the mill-owners agreed to the appointment of an arbitrator; the strike had lasted twenty-one days.

Gandhi himself was troubled over the fast. It seemed the one way of recalling his followers to the seriousness of their pledge. But it also exercised great pressure on the mill-owners, many of whom were friends. Gandhi pleaded that the fast was directed to his followers, not against his opponents, and begged the latter not to withdraw from their position on account of his action. Even this did not satisfy him, and he considered that the fast on this occasion inadvertently exercised some undue pressure.

There was a gala meeting to celebrate the settlements. Both workers and owners were there, and the latter had provided sweets to be distributed all round. They met together beneath the great tree under which the strikers' meetings had been held. But there was an unexpected crush and scramble for the sweets, which seemed extraordinary in view of the men's previous strike-discipline. An enquiry later revealed that the news of the distribution had reached the ears of the beggar population of Ahmedabad. These had infiltrated themselves in large numbers into the ranks of the waiting mill-workers and had thus created the confusion. The attempt to share out the sweets had therefore to be abandoned until the following day, when what was left of them was distributed in Sheth Ambalal's bungalow, and the men who had behaved with so much control during the strike scrambled and shoved like children for the sweets.

Gandhi had found time to supervise the work of erecting a weaving-shed at the Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati River near Ahmedabad. But he had no time to stay with his little community when the strike was over.

At Kheda the position was serious. A condition approaching famine had arisen owing to a widespread failure of crops and the cultivators' very moderate demand was that the Land Revenue Rules should be applied. The Rules provided that where the crop was below a certain value the cultivators could claim a full suspension of the revenue assessment for the year. The officials maintained that the crop was over the prescribed value and resisted the popular demand for arbitration.

With Gandhi was Desai, Shrimati Anasuyabehn, the coura-

geous woman leader of the Ahmedabad workers; and Vallabhabhai Patel who suspended a lucrative practice at the Bar, which he was destined never to resume, in order to take part in the struggle. When the preliminary investigation was completed and the usual overtures of friendship and willingness to negotiate were rejected, a pledge was formulated. The peasants solemnly bound themselves to withhold the revenue. "We shall rather let our lands be forfeited, than that by voluntary payment we should allow our case to be considered false or should compromise our self-respect."

For a while nothing happened. But when the people's firmness showed no signs of wavering the Government began to sell the peasants' cattle and to seize whatever movables they could lay hands on. This unnerved many, but a considerable number remained firm.

To test the position of the authorities eight volunteers undertook to remove the onion crop from a field which had been 'attached'. They were duly arrested and sentenced, but the event put fresh heart into many.

Still it was evident that large numbers of the peasants scarcely understood the nature of Satyagraha, and Gandhi was much relieved when an early settlement was reached. The Collector announced that if the well-to-do paid up, the poorer ones would be granted suspension. The decision was not very fairly operated and Gandhi considers that "it lacked the essentials of a complete triumph" because "the end of a Satyagraha campaign can be described as worthy only when it leaves the Satyagrahis stronger and more spirited than they are in the beginning."

From Nadiad, the headquarters of the Kheda campaign, Gandhi went to a War Conference in Delhi at the invitation of the Viceroy. He went with some doubts, not because the Conference was a War Conference concerned with recruiting, but because the Ali Brothers, the Moslem leaders, were not there. They were in jail. Gandhi had been in touch with them, showing a friendly interest in the Moslem grievances, and had been using his influence to heal the breach that separated the two communities. The great Hindu nationalist leader Lokamanya Tilak was not to be there, either. These were good reasons for hesitation. But after a private conversation with the

Viceroy, Gandhi yielded. Only he asked if he might speak in Hindustani. No one had spoken in that language at a Viceroy's Conference, but he was allowed to do so if he would speak also in English. His speech was one sentence: "With a full sense of responsibility I beg to support the resolution." With a full sense of responsibility.... For Gandhi could see clearly the choice before India. India was vitally concerned in the outcome of the war; sympathies and interests alike drew her to the Allied side in the struggle. Had India been wholly non-violent, she might have found expression for her convictions in some tremendous extension of Satyagraha. But India did not understand or accept Satyagraha, and the choice was the old choice, violence or cowardice? Better to fight for what you believe right, than abstain from violence only from weakness, from selfishness. To do that would be a betrayal of oneself, a betrayal of one's country; and it would throw upon the purity of Satyagraha the stain of cowardice. Gandhi's mind was clear. He had, after all, made this decision more than once before. In the Boer War, in the Zulu Rebellion, in London in 1914, he had chosen to organise ambulance units believing as he did that from the point of view of Ahimsa there could be no distinction between combatants and non-combatants.....

But his friends could not understand him. Did he not believe in non-violence? Wasn't any sort of holding back from violence which let loose such incalculable forces of hatred and destruction in the world, better than a rash throwing of oneself into the vortex of war? How could people be expected to find Gandhi's message intelligible as a message of peace and non-violence, if he now supported a recruiting campaign?

Gandhi, back at Nadiad, walking twenty miles a day through the heat and dust, carrying his food, spurning bedding, speaking, pleading, arguing, found that even Andrews, Polak, and his own comrades were in doubt. To him his position seemed simple enough, plain beyond question. What was it he told men, after all? "To take part in the work until you have learned your lesson from it. When you have really learned that, you will no longer need to take part in it; you will be above it."

He was shocked at the reception they gave him. Those who had been so ready to volunteer to struggle for their own rights,

were surly or unheeding now. Time and again he had the same conversations, too, with his friends.

"You have proclaimed that love overcometh hatred," they would say reproachfully. "Yes, I know," he answered rather sadly, "but I see that my countrymen are not refraining from acts of physical violence because of love for their fellows, but from cowardice, and peace with cowardice is much worse than a battlefield with bravery. I would rather they died fighting than cringed in fear." Sometimes he thought of offering himself as a combatant soldier, as an example and reproach to the others. But that he could not do. Every instinct warned him against that subtle betrayal of his own spiritual integrity.

One evening he paid a visit to the Ashram. As he walked back towards Sabarmati station next day he felt dysentery surging over him. He had had a touch of it the day before and had been careless in not fasting until it was gone. By ten in the evening, when he reached Nadiad, he was in acute pain. The long strain of the recruiting campaign, and the doubts and arguments, had undermined his strength. But he refused all medicines. He preferred, he said, to suffer the penalty for his folly. While he was still tossing in a delirious fever the news came of Germany's final defeat.

Gandhi's health did not improve. He was incapable of reading. He could scarcely speak. All interest in living had ceased. It was in the hopeless depths of this collapse that he was persuaded by his wife to take goat's milk. Years before in Africa he had vowed to give up milk because of the ill-treatment of cows in India. In drinking goat's milk he did not in fact infringe the letter of his vow, but he afterwards considered that he had accepted something of a compromise, since the exception of goat's milk had not been explicit in his mind when taking the vow.

Then as he was beginning at last to rally, came news of the Rowlatt Bills. These issued from the report of a Committee under the Presidentship of Sir Sidney Rowlatt which was published on July 19th 1918, and recommended practically the perpetuation of the provisions of the Defence of India Act, as Rajendra Prasad has said, "taking away trial by juries and assessors in case of seditious crimes, taking away the preliminary proceedings of commitment on the one hand and the right of

appeal after conviction on the other, authorising trials in camera and admission of evidence not subjected to cross-examination and not recorded by the trial court under certain circumstances, and, above all, reserving to the Executive the right and power not only to restrict the liberty of the individual by demanding securities with or without sureties, by restricting his residence or requiring notification of change of residence, and demanding abstention from certain acts such as engaging in journalism, distributing leaflets, attending meetings, etc., but also to deprive him of it by arresting and confining him."

"The abuses," Prasad adds, "to which similar provisions of the Defence of India Act, and the rules promulgated under powers conferred by it had been put, showed the country what these proposals meant and they naturally created consternation in the country, and when armistice was declared in the autumn of 1918, India was seething with discontent at what she rightly considered to be a betrayal of her after the time of 'need of the Empire' had passed away. Suspicion was naturally roused that the promised Reforms would be postponed and the ordinary rights of the citizen to enjoy freedom of movement and sanctity of home and home-life taken away on the pretext of the existence of a revolutionary conspiracy in the country."

Gandhi was startled to read these drastic recommendations. Within a month he was on his feet again, and at Ahmedabad discussing the situation with Vallabhbhai Patel and others. "Something must be done," he urged. "But what can we do in the circumstances?" Patel asked doubtfully. "If even a handful of men can be found to sign the pledge of resistance," said Gandhi, "and the proposed measure is passed into law in defiance of it, we ought to offer Satyagraha at once." He would give battle to it alone, he added, if he were not laid up in his present helpless condition.

There were more meetings, a Satyagraha Pledge was signed at the Ashram and published in the Press, and an organisation was formed for the Satyagraha, since it seemed unlikely that any of the important existing organisations would adopt the method entirely. Gandhi paid the only visit of his life to the Legislature to hear Sastri deliver an impassioned and solemn warning to the Government not to make the Bills into law. "But," said Gandhi, "you can wake a man only if he is really asleep; no

effort you may make will produce any effect upon him if he is merely pretending sleep. That was precisely the Government's position."

Gandhi was still very weak. But now he accepted an invitation to make the long journey south to Madras to discuss the position with new friends, Rangaswami Iyengar and Rajagopalachari. He could not yet sufficiently raise his voice to speak at meetings, and could seldom afterwards stand while addressing a large meeting.

Out of the discussions emerged a proposal. Gandhi should draw up "a comprehensive manual of the science of Satyagraha, embodying even minute details". This Gandhi felt to be impossible. "The very nature of the science of Satyagraha," he once wrote, "precludes the student from seeing more than the step immediately in front of him."

News came that the Rowlatt Bill had been published as an Act. That night Gandhi fell asleep while thinking over the problem. Towards the small hours of the morning he awoke, and in the twilight condition between sleeping and waking an idea suddenly broke upon him. Early in the morning he was explaining his inspiration to Rajagopalachari.

"The idea came to me last night in a dream, that we should call upon the country to observe a general hartal. Satyagraha is a process of self-purification. Let all the people of India, therefore, suspend their business on that day, and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer."



## CHAPTER V

### INDIA AWAKES—THE NON-CO-OPERATION CAMPAIGNS

THEY were all agreed about the idea and the date was fixed for March 30th 1919, but afterwards changed to April 6th. News of the change reached the Punjab too late and the hartal was observed in Delhi on March 30th. Delhi had seen nothing like it before. Hindus and Moslems seemed at one under Swami Shraddhananda and Hakim Ajmal Khan. The police opened fire on a hartal procession, causing a number of casualties. Tension in the Punjab increased.

To Gandhi, now at Bombay, Shraddhananda sent an urgent summons. Similar appeals came from Lahore and from Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlu at Amritsar. Gandhi wired back that he would visit Delhi immediately after the April 6th demonstrations in Bombay, and would then go on to Amritsar.

The hartal in Bombay was completely successful, and associated with it were two measures of symbolic civil disobedience. In defiance of the Salt Laws, which the Government declined to repeal, people were invited to prepare salt from sea-water in their own houses. Special editions of two proscribed works were sold in the streets—Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and a Gujarati translation of Ruskin's *Unto this Last*. The Government declared that the reprint was a new edition of the books and to sell them did not constitute an offence under the law!

On the night of April 7th Gandhi set out for Delhi, but on the journey he was served with an order prohibiting him from entering the Punjab. He refused to comply. "I want to go to the Punjab," he said, "not to foment unrest but to allay it." A little farther on he was arrested. He gave brief messages to his secretary, Mahadev Desai, and told him to go on to Delhi.

In the train on the way back to Bombay the Police Inspector tried to persuade Gandhi to abandon his intention of going to the Punjab, but Gandhi would not do so. He was turned loose on the outskirts of Bombay and almost at once was picked up by a friend's carriage. The news was bad. Gandhi's arrest

had incensed the people to the pitch of frenzy. Only his presence could pacify them.

Two or three friends hurried Gandhi into a car and drove him to the scene of the disturbances. On seeing him the people went mad with joy, but in the noise and confusion his urgent advice to remain calm was scarcely heard. Before the densely packed crowd could be quieted an officer in command of mounted police gave the order to disperse the crowd and at once the troopers charged brandishing their lances. Gandhi just escaped injury, but many were trampled under foot, mauled and crushed in the tumult. There was hardly any room for the horses to pass and no exit by which the people could disperse. So the cavalry blindly cut their way through the crowd, horsemen and people mixed together in a mad confusion.

With difficulty Gandhi reached the Commissioner's office. The news was ominous now. There was trouble at Ahmedabad and Amritsar. Didn't Gandhi see that all this was his fault? Gandhi answered that if the people had indeed resorted to violence he would at once suspend civil disobedience; but that the responsibility must rest on those who attacked unarmed crowds and prevented him from entering the Punjab to pacify the people who had invited him for that purpose.

On the sands at Chowpati he addressed a huge meeting. "Satyagraha," he insisted, "is essentially a weapon of the truthful. A Satyagrahi is pledged to non-violence, and unless people observe it in thought, word and deed, I cannot offer mass Satyagraha."

Then he hastened to Ahmedabad. There had been a rumour, after Gandhi's arrest, that Anasuyabehn had been arrested too, and the mill-hands had struck work and committed acts of violence. A sergeant had been killed. The railway line had been damaged near Nadiad, a Government officer had been murdered at Viramgam, and Ahmedabad was under martial law.

Gandhi held a public meeting on the grounds of the Sabar-mati Ashram. He counselled those who had been guilty of acts of violence to confess their guilt, and declared a three days' penitential fast for himself.

From Ahmedabad he went to Nadiad. He knew now how serious the disturbances had been, he saw that people who

could remain calm in a local struggle needed far more discipline and leadership before they could maintain sufficient control in moments of intense national excitement. Speaking at Nadiad he owned to a "Himalayan miscalculation". Before re-starting civil disobedience on a mass scale it would be necessary to create a band of well-trying pure-hearted volunteers who thoroughly understood the strict conditions of Satyagraha.

Already at Bombay on April 11th he had warned his followers: "If we cannot conduct this movement without the slightest violence from our side the movement might have to be abandoned, or it may be necessary to give it a different and still more restricted shape. It may be necessary to go even further. The time may come for me to offer Satyagraha against ourselves." Now, on April 18th 1919, he issued a statement suspending Civil Disobedience temporarily. "I am sorry," he wrote "that when I embarked upon a mass movement I underrated the forces of evil, and I must now pause and consider how best to meet the situation."

Meanwhile the tragedy of the Punjab had taken place. On April 10th Sir Michael O'Dwyer, not content with preventing Gandhi from entering the province, took the fatal step of deporting the responsible local leaders, Dr. Kitchlu and Dr. Satyapal. A large body of men marched to the house of the Deputy Commissioner to make representations for the release of these leaders and was fired on. Serious rioting then broke out, burning, looting and several murders and assaults. On April 11th General Dyer arrived at Amritsar and occupied the town. There was no incident on 11th or 12th, but on the 13th a meeting was advertised to take place at a vacant space known as Jallianwalla Bagh. Dyer prohibited the meeting and when the crowd assembled he suddenly appeared in the only exit to the square with troops and machine guns. Within 30 seconds of his arrival he opened fire and continued for ten minutes shooting into the thickest of the unarmed crowd.

Subsequently there has been considerable dispute about the details. The Indian enquiry recorded that 1,200 were killed and 3,600 wounded. The Hunter Commission only admitted 400 killed and many more injured. Since it has been often stated that Dyer only fired because he thought the crowd would attack if he hesitated, it may be well to quote his own words

before the Hunter Committee: "I think it is quite possible I could have dispersed the crowd without firing, but they would have come back again and laughed, and I should have made what I consider to be a fool of myself." Sir Michael O'Dwyer at once sent the General a telegram: "Your action correct. Lieutenant Governor approves."

This was only one event in the reign of terror in the Punjab. Men were flogged, crowds were bombed and machine-gunned from the air, people were forced to crawl on their stomachs at the whim of the military. It was admitted, as Gandhi emphasized in his statement on April 18th, that the events in the Punjab were unconnected with the Satyagraha movement. But Gandhi still felt that his presence might ease the situation and he begged the Viceroy for permission to go. This was refused, and, rather than court arrest, he continued his work at Bombay. A friendly European editor, Mr. Horniman, had just been deported, although his only offence was the expression of quite moderate opinions. Gandhi took over the editorship of another paper, *Young India* to fill the gap. He needed the paper for the efficient conduct of his movement, and he edited it with typical austerity, refusing all advertisements.

C.F. Andrews had reached the Punjab and his heart-rending account of the position moved Gandhi to plead again and again for permission to go to Amritsar. At last in October he was allowed to go, and after a tremendous reception at Lahore he set to work with Shradhdhananda, Malaviya, and Pandit Motilal Nehru, whom he now met for the first time, to sift the evidence. C.R. Das, Abbas Tyabji and Mr. Jayakar also joined in the enquiry. The Indians had decided to boycott the Hunter Commission and to conduct their own enquiry independently. The situation was curiously reminiscent of the crisis of the South African struggle, and the discrepancy in the published conclusions seems to justify the decision not to co-operate. Gandhi himself drafted the Indian report, and he vouches for the fact that every statement in it is substantiated by evidence, and is free from conscious exaggeration.

From Amritsar Gandhi was called to Delhi to a joint Hindu-Moslem Conference on the Khilafat question. At this time relations between the Congress and the All-India Moslem League were fairly good. In 1916 the Lucknow Congress had ratified

an agreement between the All-India Congress Committee and the League on the steps that should be taken towards self-government, so that India should become "an equal partner in the Empire with the self-governing Dominions", the Moslems were conceded separate electorates and the right to veto legislation if three-quarters of their representatives in any legislature so decided. The Hindu-Moslem concordat was subsequently accepted by, and incorporated en bloc in, the Montford Reforms—the convenient abbreviation for the report on constitutional reform issued by Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford on July 8th, 1918.

The Khilafat grievance may be described in the words of Rajendra Prasad:

"When war broke out between England and Turkey, Indian Moslems found themselves on the horns of a dilemma. Should they help the Turks and the Sultan who stood as the representative and Defender of their faith, or should they support the British power under which they had been living for more than a century? They decided to throw in their lot with the British in the hope and faith that their religious places would be kept under Moslem control, and they would be able to secure for their Turkish co-religionists terms of peace which would be favourable to them. Their faith was based on declarations made by the Viceroy in India and the Prime Minister of England (Mr. Lloyd George) in which the former had pledged immunity of the holy places in Arabia, Mesopotamia and of Jeddah, and the latter had assured the Moslems—'Nor are we fighting to deprive Turkey of its capital or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race.'

"When war came to an end and rumours about the severe nature of the terms proposed to Turkey got abroad, Moslems became naturally alarmed and representation began to be made to the authorities, insisting on the fulfilment of the pledge so unequivocally given by the Prime Minister."

So at Delhi on November 23rd, 1919 the first All-India Khilafat Conference met to discuss what was to be done. There was some suggestion that to win Hindu support the Moslems should agree to refrain from killing cattle in violation of the

Hindu doctrine of veneration of the cow. Gandhi would not hear of such a bargain. "If the Khilafat question has a just and legitimate basis, as I believe it has, and if the Government has really committed a gross injustice, the Hindus are bound to stand by the Moslems in their demand for the redress of the Khilafat wrong." The Moslems might of their own free-will stop cow slaughter, and it would be a credit to them if they did so. But Hindu support must be unconditional.

Another suggestion was that the Punjab terror should be included in the grievances. Gandhi unhesitatingly opposed it. The Punjab question was, he contended, a local affair. "If we mixed up the local question with the Khilafat question which arose directly out of the peace terms, we should be guilty of a serious indiscretion."

A resolution was carried for the boycott of foreign cloth and the stimulation of home-spun. Gandhi was able to defeat an angry attempt to boycott all British goods in a desperate attempt to wreak some vengeance on the British Empire in the event of betrayal. He made a fervent appeal for non-violence and wrestling with words in an attempt to make his meaning plain he suddenly hit upon the phrase "non-co-operation". It was decided that, in the event of the peace term being unfavourable, India would resort to non-co-operation with the Government.

In December the Congress met for its annual session at Amritsar. There were over 7,000 delegates—2,000 more than at any of the War-time sessions.

The Congress had been brought into being in 1885 by an English Civil Servant, Mr. Allan Octavian Hume, with the approval of the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin. The Congress was intended to be a safety valve for Indian politicians, who, under the stimulus of Western learning, for which Ram Mohan Roy had laboured so untiringly, were beginning to understand Western legal institutions and parliamentary methods.

For many years the Congress was abjectly polite in its dealings with the Government of India and ultra-loyalist. But some good work was done. As early as 1893 Malaviya was urging in Congress the need to revive the village industries.

In 1907 there was a complete split in the Congress, and at the annual session in Surat there was almost a free fight. The

militant Lokamanya Tilak and his Nationalist followers were for extreme measures of boycott and protest over the Partition of Bengal which had been carried through in flat defiance of the sentiments of the population. The Moderates were alarmed and angry at what they regarded as extremist measures. A little later Tilak was arrested and imprisoned and was not released from Mandalay until June 1914; meanwhile the agitation had been successful and the Partition had been annulled by Royal Proclamation in 1911.

This was the issue of which Gandhi had written in *Hind Swaraj* that it would awaken India to a realisation that pious resolutions and memorials will not alter the policy of the British—some mighty force must stand behind the spoken words to compel justice if justice does not yield to earnest pleading.

Mrs. Besant, who had come to the front in Indian politics in 1914, made desperate efforts to bring together the Moderates, from whom all power and influence seemed to be slipping away, and the Nationalists, but without success.

In 1916 Tilak started his Home Rule League—quite separate from Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League founded six months later. By the end of the year Tilak had led the Nationalists back into the Congress where they now had a strong majority. But the struggle was not quite over and Amritsar seemed likely to be an eventful session.

The main issue was the Congress attitude to the King's announcement on the new reforms which had been foreshadowed in the Montford Report. The principal features of the Act of 1919 were, to quote Professor Coupland's summary:

“(i) It established a measure of Provincial autonomy by devolving authority in Provincial matters on to the Provincial Governments and freeing them to a large extent from Central control. (ii) It began the process of realising responsible Government in the Provinces by dividing the field of government ('dyaichy'); while such vital subjects as law and order were 'reserved' to the control of the Governor and his Executive Councillors, responsible as before to the Secretary of State and Parliament, the rest of the field was 'transferred' to Indian Ministers responsible to their Provincial Legislatures. (iii) It converted the existing Central Legislative Council into a bi-cameral legislature for British

India, directly elected for the most part on a national or unitary basis; dyarchy was not introduced at the Centre, the whole Executive remaining responsible to the Secretary of State and Parliament. (iv) It established a Chamber of Princes representing the rulers of the Indian States for deliberative purposes. (v) It provided, lastly, for the appointment of a Statutory Commission in ten years' time to consider the possibility of the further extension of responsible government."

To the ardent Nationalists the reforms were unacceptable. C.R. Das held strongly that they ought to be rejected as wholly inadequate and unsatisfactory. Tilak was inclined to follow Das.

Gandhi believed that an attempt ought to be made to work the Reforms. The thought of opposing the Congress celebrities appalled him and he suggested to Malaviya and Motilal Nehru that it would be in the general interest if he absented himself from the session. They would not hear of it. Gandhi also objected to the custom of taking votes indiscriminately so that delegates and visitors participated, and was given an assurance that on the day in question delegates only would be permitted to vote. So he consented to frame a resolution which was to be supported by Malaviya and Mr. Jinnah.

Gandhi's draft was moved as an amendment to C.R. Das's resolution. The amendment was itself modified, but as finally adopted it carried Gandhi's point: "...This Congress trusts that, so far as may be possible, the people will so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government..."

Das and Gandhi shared the honours of the day, but the official Congress history records that "there is no manner of doubt whatever that the whole Congress was a triumph for Gandhi". He politely insisted that he could not remain in the Congress unless it condemned the mob-violence in the Punjab and Gujarat. The Subjects Committee were for throwing out the Resolution; the delegates were sullen or amazed. But Gandhi's speech was superb.

"There is no greater Resolution before the Congress than this one. The whole key to success in the future lies in your hearty recognition of the truth underlying it, and acting up to



it. To the extent we fail in recognising the Eternal Truth that underlies it, to that extent we are bound to fail. . . . The Government went mad at the time; we went mad also at the time. I say, do not return madness with madness, but return madness with sanity and the whole situation will be yours." He was irresistible.

To complete the occasion the Ali Brothers arrived, released under a Royal Proclamation granting amnesty to political prisoners. Mohammed Ali beaming broadly from the platform announced that he came from Chhindwara jail—"with a return ticket". There was no doubt about it; the Congress was becoming united as it had not been united since the split at Surat twelve years before, and the Hindu and Moslem leaders were united too, at least for the time being. The concordat of 1916 still held.

Gandhi set the seal on his work at Amritsar by drafting a new Constitution for the Congress (which he still regards "with a certain measure of pride.") Its most important feature was a severe limitation of the number of delegates, to keep the annual session within manageable dimensions.

In the first months of 1920 public attention was chiefly concentrated on the Khilafat question. Dr. Ansari led a deputation to the Viceroy in January, and another deputation headed by Mohammed Ali went to England and waited on the Prime Minister; they asked permission to place their views before the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference and were refused.

In May the terms were made known and the Viceroy issued an explanatory statement, asking the Moslems of India to brace themselves to bear with patience and resignation the misfortunes of their Turkish co-religionists.

At the end of May came the Report of the Hunter Commission. It was not unanimous. The Indian members considered that the outbreak of mob-violence in the Punjab had been accidental; the Europeans declared it to have been a premeditated revolt. Moreover the Hunter Report gave very much lower figures for the Amritsar Massacre than the Congress Report which had appeared in March, and for the accuracy of which Gandhi himself vouched. Above all, Sir Michael O'Dwyer remained in office, the censure of General Dyer was very light, and it was at once guessed that little if any action would

be taken against most of the Europeans criticised in the Report.

These two events broke Gandhi's faith in the Government of India and in the possibilities of co-operation. Under the 1919 Act India was to be given a large measure of self-government, as a reward for her services and sacrifices in the Great War. The Rowlatt Act had been a bad omen, but still he had persisted in offering co-operation and had carried his point against C.R. Das in the momentous Amritsar Congress.

The 1919 Act itself was bad enough from the point of view of the Indians. It offered a measure of provincial autonomy, although the reins remained in the hands of the British even there. It consolidated the position of the Princes most of whom were anything but representative leaders of their peoples. The Central Legislature was practically powerless. "As for the assembly at Delhi," wrote Mr. Winston Churchill in 1931, quoting the private comments of Mr. Montagu at the time when the Act was passed, "it is only 'a debating society' without power to affect the course of events in opposition to the will of the Imperial Government."

All this Gandhi had known. But he was a realist. He believed that the spirit of co-operation was more important than the outward forms of organisation and Government. If the British were willing to govern India in accordance with the wishes of the people, the people should co-operate so that at the end of the ten-year period laid down by the Act they would have shown themselves fit for self-government.

The broken pledge to the Moslems and the failure to atone for the Punjab terrorism showed Gandhi quite plainly that India was not to have the substance of representative Government. On the contrary the most explicit and most deeply-held convictions of the two great religious communities were flouted by Government; it was not dyarchy but Dyerarchy.

Already in March Gandhi had framed a programme of Non-co-operation to be put into effect if the Peace Terms did not meet the sentiments of the Indian Moslems. The Moslems believed that in certain circumstances violence, the Holy War, was justified. Gandhi's task was to persuade them to adopt only non-violent methods:

"The barbarous method is warfare, open or secret. This must be ruled out if only because it is impracticable. If I

could but persuade every one that it is always bad, we should gain all lawful ends much quicker. The power that an individual or a nation forswearing violence can generate, is a power that is irresistible."

Gandhi believes, then, that non-Violence, which is for him a faith, a weapon for all occasions, can be effectively used as a policy by those who would in some circumstances resort to violence.

His defence of this position, given in an article in *Young India* in 1922, is interesting:

"I make bold to say that violence is the creed of no religion and that, whereas non-violence in most cases is obligatory in all (religions), violence is merely permissible in some cases. But I have not put before India the final form of non-violence. The non-violence that I have preached from Congress platforms is non-violence as a policy. But even policies require honest adherence in thought, word and deed; otherwise I become an imposter. Non-violence being a policy means that it can upon due notice be given up when it proves unsuccessful or ineffective. But simple morality demands that, whilst a particular policy is pursued, it must be pursued with all one's heart."

Non-co-operation was adopted by a joint Hindu-Muslim Conference at Allahabad on June 30th. A message was sent to the Viceroy begging him to secure a revision of the Peace Terms. Otherwise Non-co-operation would commence on August 1st.

The gravity of the Moslems' grievance was revealed when 18,000 of them tried to make their way out of India into Afghanistan rather than remain in India under British rule.

Gandhi, Shaukat Ali and others now made an extensive and exhausting tour through the Punjab, Sindh and Madras, addressing huge meetings on the Khilafat question. It took the leaders three quarters of an hour to get from the train to the waiting motorcar at Madras, struggling and almost suffocated in the jostling crowd, and finally being shoved into the car by hard-pressed volunteers. Gandhi wrote pungent descriptions of his experience in *Young India*:

"We were travelling Madras by the night train leaving

Bangalore. We had been taking meetings at Salem during the day, motoring to Bangalore, a distance of 125 miles from Salem, taking there a meeting in drenching rain and thereafter we had to entrain. We needed night's rest but there was none to be had. At almost every station of importance, large crowds had gathered to greet us. About midnight we reached Jolarpet junction. The train had to stop there nearly forty minutes, or stopped that night all those terrible minutes. Maulana Shaukat Ali requested the crowd to disperse. But the more he argued the more they shouted 'Maulana Shaukat Ali-ki-jai,' evidently thinking that the Maulana could not mean what he said. They had come from twenty miles' distance, they were waiting there for hours, they must have their satisfaction. The Maulana gave up the struggle, he pretended to sleep. The adorers thereupon mounted the footboards to have a peep at the Maulana. As the light in our compartment was put out, they brought in lanterns. At last I thought I would try. I rose, went to the door. It was a signal for a great shout of joy. The noise tore me to pieces, I was so tired. All my appeals proved fruitless in the end. They would stop for a while to renew the noise again. I shut the windows but the crowd was not to be baffled. They tried to open the windows from outside. They must see us both. And so the tussle went on till my son took it up. He harangued them, appealed to them for the sake of the other passengers. Peeping however went on to the last minute. It was all well-meant, it was all an exhibition of boundless love, yet how cruel, how unreasonable. It was a mob without a mind. There were no intelligent men of influence among them and so nobody listened to anybody."

After another such experience a month later he wrote that it was "a unique demonstration of love run mad".

"An expectant and believing people groaning under misery and insult believe that I have a message of hope for them. They come from all quarters within walking reach to meet me. I do believe that I have a message of hope and certain deliverance, but ? Yes, it is a big BJT. There is no deliverance and no hope without sacrifice, discipline and self-control. Mere sacrifice without discipline will be un-

availing. How to evolve discipline out of this habitual indiscipline?"

He saw the problem clearly enough. But the full significance of these universal symptoms of well-meaning disorder escaped him, as the full meaning of the disturbances in the Bombay Presidency and the Punjab had escaped him. He had owned to one "Himalayan miscalculation". The time would come when he would admit that, despite the greater precautions he insisted on taking, he was guilty of another grave error of judgment.

Before Gandhi lay the task of convincing the Congress that they must adopt the Non-co-operation programme. He had addressed a stern letter to the Viceroy: "My duty to the Empire to which I owe my loyalty requires me to resist the cruel violence that has been done to the Moslem sentiment. So far as I am aware Moslems and Hindus have as a whole lost faith in British justice and honour...In these circumstances, the only course open to one like me is either in despair to sever all connection with British rule, or, if I still retained faith in the inherent superiority of the British constitution to all others at present in vogue, to adopt such means as will rectify the wrong done, and thus restore confidence. I have not lost faith in such superiority and I am not without hope that somehow or other justice will yet be rendered if we show the requisite capacity for suffering."

Now he addressed the Congress public. "Better for me a beggar's bowl than the richest possession from hands stained with the blood of the innocents of Jallianwala," he cried. "Better by far a warrant of imprisonment than honeyed words from those who have wantonly wounded the religious sentiment of my seventy million brothers."

There was to be a special session of the Congress at Calcutta early in September, and Gandhi, still not sure of carrying the Conference with him on the programme of Non-co-operation, accepted the Presidentship of the All-India Home Rule League, from which Mrs. Besant withdrew and published a statement of policy.

At Calcutta Gandhi again found C.R. Das his most formidable opponent, although only nine months before the positions had been reversed. Gandhi's Resolution, embodying his Non-

co-operation programme passed the Subjects Committee by only seven votes. In the open Session Bipin Chandra Pal and Das moved an amendment asking that a mission go to the Prime Minister to state India's grievances and to demand immediate autonomy. Gandhi's resolution was accepted by a large majority.

His programme called for the surrender of titles and honorary offices, refusal to attend official functions, withdrawal of children from schools and colleges controlled by the Government (alternative National schools were to be set up), boycott of law-courts, boycott of elections by candidates and voters, and boycott of foreign goods. Coupled with the last point was an emphatic call for the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving.

When the elections were held, 80 per cent of the electorate followed the advice of Congress and refrained from voting.

On August 1st, just before this Special Session, Tilak had died. He had been a great and noble warrior in the Nationalist cause, and his gifts and inclinations as a professor of mathematics have been forgotten. "I detest politics," he had once said. "I still wish to write a book on differential calculus. The country is in a very bad way and none of you is doing anything for it. So I am compelled to look into the matter." And when a friend had pointed out that his salary of Rs. 30 from a nationalist school would scarcely suffice to bury him he replied: "Society must bother about it more than ourselves. They will see to the burning of our corpse for purposes of sanitation, if not of hero-worship." In politics he had felt that one must be as cunning as the next man. "Politics is a game of worldly people, not of sadhus," he wrote to Gandhi and Gandhi answered that "it betrays mental laziness to think that the world is not for sadhus." But he felt the loss of Tilak deeply, and as he set down a tribute to his faith and patriotism and courage he saw that: "It is blasphemy to talk of such a man as dead. The permanent essence of him abides with us for ever."

When the Congress met in regular session at Nagpur in December the tide of Non-co-operation was beginning to turn. At Calcutta Gandhi had fought almost alone, with some late assistance from Motilal Nehru. Now before an enormous

gathering of 14,500 (no less than 1,000 were Moslems) he had the support of Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and—C.R. Das! At the wish of the President, and presumably to meet Das and his supporters, the object of the Satyagraha was defined as Swaraj, by which most of the delegates meant Dominion Status. Gandhi concurred in the alteration, and the resolution was carried by a large majority. Gandhi also obtained an important alteration in the Creed of the Congress which was finally passed with only two dissensions after a whole day's discussion. Previously the Creed had referred only to the attainment of Swaraj by legitimate means, now the phrase was amended to legitimate and peaceful so that there might be no mistake as to the authority for the non-violence programme. Gandhi always held that his peaceful means constituted a thoroughly constitutional theory which did not find favour with the British.

The months that followed the Nagpur Conference were eventful. "Never before in the history of India, since its connection with British," writes Rajendra Prasad, "had popular indignation and popular enthusiasm been greater. Never before during this long period had the country secured the loving and ungrudging services of so many of her sons. Never before had the faith of the people in themselves and in the country's ability to solve its own difficulties burned brighter."

Hundreds of lawyers suspended their practice, local panchayats—self-appointed courts of justice—began to supersede the State's law courts for the settlement of disputes, thousands of college students withdrew themselves and many schools were altogether deserted. National Colleges, Vidyapiths, were opened in Aligarh, Gujarat, Bihar, Benares, Bengal and Maharashtra, and in February Gandhi opened one at Calcutta. A large number of national schools sprang up. The State visit of the Duke of Connaught was boycotted. Hartals were observed wherever the Duke went and after opening some of the Provincial Legislative Councils and the new Legislature at Delhi he left the country. Gandhi concentrated particularly on encouraging hand-spinning and weaving.

The spirit of non-violence was permeating not only the struggle for Swaraj but other social struggles quite unconnected with the Congress movement. An agrarian movement deve-

loped in the United Provinces where there was serious oppression of the peasants by their landlords, and an extraordinarily heroic campaign among the Akali Sikhs, in which two hundred lives were lost on a single occasion in a struggle for religious rights, took Gandhi on a special mission to the Punjab in March.

In August 1920, when it first became clear that Non-co-operation would be adopted by the Moslems and the Nationalists on a large scale, Lord Chelmsford had affected to despise the movement which he described as "the most foolish of all foolish schemes". But as the programme developed throughout 1921 repressive measures were employed, despite an earlier assurance that no action was intended against those who remained entirely non-violent and whose action was therefore quite lawful.

The Congress Council—All-India Congress Committee—met in March at Bezwada and passed a short-term programme which succeeded in raising in the prescribed three months a crore of rupees, and recruited nearly a crore of members, as well as setting 20 lakhs of spinning-wheels humming throughout the length and breadth of the sub-continent.

While this work was in progress there were one or two disturbances. At Malegaon there occurred a riot resulting in the death of several policemen and some members of a mob, and there were acts of incendiarism. The Ali Brothers were sometimes reckless in their public speeches and through the intervention of C.F. Andrews, Gandhi came to Simla to see the Viceroy, and subsequently persuaded the Ali Brothers to withdraw publicly one or two statements that might have been interpreted as incitement to violence. This friendly talk with the Viceroy at the height of a major struggle created bewilderment, suspicion and a great deal of misunderstanding. People were still unfamiliar with the Gandhian form of warfare in which one is at all times ready to negotiate with the opponent and if possible to reach agreement.

Gandhi was proceeding with considerable caution, and he carried the All-India Congress Committee with him in his determination that Civil Disobedience should be postponed until the completion of the constructive Swadeshi programme which was regarded as a test of the measure of influence attained by the Congress, and a guarantee of the stability of the non-violent atmosphere.



To Gandhi it became more and more clear that in the spinning wheel lay the salvation of India, the restoration of something like independence and self-respect for the humble villagers. He redoubled his efforts to spread the use of the wheel—the *charkha*.—throughout the land—and in his efforts to bring home to the people the extent to which reliance on foreign machine-made cloth had ruined them he organised at the end of July an enormous bon-fire in Bombay.

"It was a most inspiring sight," he wrote proudly, "witnessed by thousands of spectators. And as the flame leapt up and enveloped the whole pyramid, there was a shout of joy resounding through the air. It was as if our shackles had been broken asunder. A glow of freedom passed through the vast concourse. It was a noble act nobly performed. It has, I am sure, struck the imagination of the people as nothing else could have so far as Swadeshi is concerned."

His friends thought otherwise. Some felt that the gesture was one of arrogance and pride. Some said that the destruction of useful and beautiful work can never be justified, and that the costly silks and saris should have been given to the poor. To the latter Gandhi answered severely. "The ill-clad or the naked millions of India need no charity but work that they can easily do in their cottages. Have not the poor any feeling of self-respect or patriotism? Is the gospel of Swadeshi only for the well-to-do?"

Tagore had more formidable objections, which Romain Rolland describes in his brilliant monograph on Mahatma Gandhi:

"... He does not realise that the fury of the masses is gathering impetus, and that instinctively these masses reason, 'Things first, men next:' He does not foresee that in this same Bombay, less than three months afterwards, men will be killing men. Gandhi is too much of a saint; he is too pure, too free from the animal passions that lie dormant in man. He does not dream that they lie there, crouching within the people, devouring his words and thriving on them. Tagore, more clear-sighted, realizes the danger the non-co-operators are skirting when they innocently lay bare the crimes of Europe, profess non-violence, and simultaneously plant in people's minds the virus which will inevitably break in violence."

About this time, but quite independently, the Moplah outbreak occurred in Malabar, and a number of Hindus were massacred by a fanatical Moslem sect which attempted forcible conversions to Islam. Gandhi and Mohammed Ali at once tried to reach the scene of the disturbances, but again the authorities intervened, and the leaders who might have calmed the people were kept away while the trouble went on for several months. Then Mohammed Ali and his brother and other leading Moslems were arrested, their offence being that in Conference at Karachi they had resolved that it was "unlawful for any faithful Moslem to serve from that day in the army or help in their recruitment", a contention that was supported by five hundred of the most respected Moslem divines. The prisoners received two years' rigorous imprisonment apiece, but the offending resolution was reprinted and distributed everywhere, the text being repeated word for word at protest meetings throughout the country, following Gandhi's example and advice at Trichinopoly where he publicly repeated the speech himself. Gandhi and fifty other prominent Congressmen also issued a manifesto asserting the right of every citizen to express his opinions, and maintaining that it now became the duty of every Indian soldier and civilian to sever his connection with the Government.

The situation was critical when the Prince of Wales landed at Bombay on 17th November. Congress, resenting the exploitation of royalty to deny India redress for deeply-felt grievances, had resolved to boycott this state visit, as they had previously boycotted the Duke of Connaught.

As the Prince passed along the decorated route, and Gandhi and his followers burnt another great pile of foreign cloth nearby, rioting broke out in another part of the city. Passers-by were molested by angry mill-hands, trams were held up, and presently inoffensive Europeans were pelted, Parsis who had not boycotted the reception were assaulted, and motor cars, trams and liquor shops were damaged and set on fire.

At mid-day news of the outbreak reached Gandhi who at once motored to the scene of the disturbances. He came upon a wrecked liquor shop, two policemen badly wounded and lying on cots unconscious and unattended. As he got out of his car the crowd surrounded him crying "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai"

—Victory to Mahatma Gandhi! But this was no victory. It was defeat, defeat for his creed of non-violence. Always the title of "Mahatma" grated in his ears, but never before had it been so unwelcome. He rebuked the crowd and they were silent. Gandhi swiftly directed his companions to convey the dying policemen to the hospital, and went on, to find two tramcars blazing fiercely, and on his way back he passed a burning car.

At five there came news of more trouble in the Bhendi Bazar where a crowd of twenty thousand was molesting passers-by and wrecking more liquor shops. There had been firing in some parts of the city and a few demonstrators had been killed. Volunteers who attempted to restrain the crowds came in for severe beatings and injury at the hands of police and military.

The disturbances continued and in the night of November 19th Gandhi issued an earnest appeal. "I must refuse," he said, "to eat or drink anything but water till the Hindus and Moslems of Bombay have made peace with the Parsis, the Christians and the Jews, and till the Non co-operators have made peace with the co-operators." Further appeals followed during the next two days but on the 23rd, a week after the outbreak, peace was restored, and at the instance of the leaders of all communities and political parties, Gandhi broke his fast at a public breakfast. It is estimated that about 400 persons were wounded and 53 killed during the disturbances.

The riots had made a deep impression on Gandhi and in *Young India* on 24th November he wrote: "I am more instrumental than any other in bringing into being the spirit of revolt. I find myself not fully capable of controlling and disciplining that spirit. I must do penance for it. For me the struggle is essentially religious. I believe in fasting and prayer, and I propose henceforth to observe every Monday a twenty-four hours' fast till Swaraj is attained." Monday is also Gandhi's day of silence.

His hopes of reviving mass Civil Disobedience had once more been dashed to pieces. The atmosphere for mass disobedience was absent. In the district of Bardoli it might be possible; there the constructive programme had been carried out and Gandhi had intended directly to launch Civil Disobedience. But Bardoli and Bombay could not be separated.

They were parts of one indivisible whole. It had been possible to isolate Malabar, to disregard Malegaon; those were disturbances not related to the struggle for Swaraj. But it was not possible to ignore Bombay.

That was his first reaction. But then the reports came in from other cities. The hartal had been complete. There had been no disturbances. No shops were opened, no vehicles plied for hire, many public offices were closed. The Europeans had been shaken by the extent of the boycott, and there was a demand for immediate Government action. The Bengal Government had declared the Khilafat and Congress Volunteer bodies unlawful, and similar notifications were also issued in several other Provinces.

Congress defied the ban. The Working Committee issued vigorous instructions for bringing under uniform discipline all existing volunteer corps, each member of which was to take a pledge of non-violence and obey the commands of his superior officers.

Government replied by arresting a number of distinguished Congress leaders, including Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das., Lajpat Rai, Abul Kalam Azad and S.E. Stokes. Thousands of volunteers were also arrested, and even the Moderate Indian politicians sent strong protests to the Government. Malaviya led a deputation to the Viceroy asking for the release of the prisoners, but Government was determined to visit the sins of Bombay on the whole nation.

About this time a Satyagraha on a local question which had been going on at Chirala in the South, in the formulation of which Gandhi had offered advice, collapsed. Government had decided to turn the village into a Municipality. The village people did not wish it. Gandhi's characteristic advice had been that if the people did not care for a municipality they should leave it and live outside. There followed an amazing mass evacuation, or *hijrat*. For ten months the people lived in huts outside the municipal limits, but most of the leaders were arrested on one pretext or another, and after almost a year they returned to their homes and submitted to the municipality.

In December Gandhi negotiated for the release of prisoners. Lord Reading was at first willing to release the Civil Disobedience prisoners but he would not release the Moslem leaders

and negotiations broke down. C.R. Das and the others were still in jail when Congress met for its annual session at Ahmedabad, and Das's presidential speech was read in his absence.

The session was momentous. C.F. Andrews, bravely appearing in European clothes as a protest against the burning of foreign cloth which he feared would inculcate violence, was received courteously and had an attentive hearing. But there was no weakening in the Congress. Twenty thousand individual Non-co-operators were already in jail. Soon thousands more would join them. Congress passed Gandhi's resolution to court arrest as members of the peaceful volunteer associations pledged to remain non-violent in thought, word and deed. In view of the impending arrest of most of the leaders, Gandhi was declared to be the sole Executive authority during the emergency with power to appoint his successor if he too should be imprisoned.

So the year 1922 opened with an intensification of the struggle. Non-violence was maintained, and now Gandhi was ready to experiment with his assertive weapons, civil disobedience in one small district only, Bardoli. He went himself, and spoke at a conference of more than 4,000 of the peasants with Vithal-bhai Patel. The audience was clothed in *khaddar*, and their mood was sober and responsible as Gandhi tested them on one point after another in the constructive programme which had to be completed before the district could be permitted to venture on civil disobedience. They had realised communal unity, they understood the significance of truth and non-violence, they were removing untouchability and accepting the outcast children in the National schools, they would spin their own thread and weave their cloth, they would face forfeiture of their movables, their cattle, their land. They would face imprisonment and death if necessary, and without resentment.

Gandhi was satisfied. The discipline of non-violence was being maintained. Bardoli, not Bombay, was the embodiment of the national spirit now. Civil disobedience should be launched. The Conference pledged itself to refrain from paying land revenue and other taxes due to the Government until further notice and on February 1st Gandhi addressed a letter to the Viceroy. He apologised once more for the Bombay outbreak but reproached the Government with its policy of repression.

"The looting of property, assaults on innocent people, the brutal treatment of prisoners in the jails including flogging, can in no sense be described as legal, civilised, or in any way necessary. This official lawlessness cannot be described by any other term but lawless repression." Had the Government's policy allowed public opinion to develop freely it would have been possible, Gandhi wrote, to advise postponement of civil disobedience until the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater discipline among the millions of its adherents. But the Government's policy of repression made the immediate adoption of mass civil disobedience an imperative duty. He begged the Viceroy to announce within seven days the release of the prisoners, the freeing of the Press from administrative coercion, and a future policy of non-interference with all non-violent activities. In that case he would suspend civil disobedience. Otherwise Bardoli would lead the way, and a hundred villages at Guntur in Madras would soon follow.

Scarcely had the letter been dispatched when news reached Gandhi of a tragic outbreak of violence at Chauri Chaura, near Gorakhpur. There had been some rioting in Madras on January 13th during the Prince's visit but Chauri Chaura was decisive. A Congress procession which had been given a promise by the police inspector that it would not be molested was allowed to pass, but the stragglers were intercepted and abused. The marchers returning at the cries of their comrades were greeted with rifle fire by the police, who then retired into the police-station. The enraged mob set fire to the building, and as the terrified police emerged they were hacked to death and the remains were thrown back into the flames. Twenty-one constables and the Sub-Inspector were thus murdered.

On February 12th, at Bardoli, Gandhi directed the Working Committee to reverse the decision to commence mass civil disobedience. Congressmen were to stop all activities designed to court arrest and imprisonment, and to cancel all processions and public meetings called to defy the Government notifications. The constructive programme was to go on, but the crucial battle with the Government must not take place.

The nation was dumbfounded at the news. Criticism and abuse came from all sides. Was the supreme struggle for home

rule to be abandoned at the last minute because a score of policemen had been killed in a minor outbreak of violence, although the rest of India remained peaceful under the most severe provocation? If so, civil disobedience might never come. It would always be possible to find some disturbance, some outbreak engineered by agents provocateur.

Gandhi showed his true greatness at this moment. "The drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme," he wrote in *Young India*, "may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound, and I venture to assure the doubters that the country will have gained by my humiliation and confession of error.....For confession of error is like a broom that sweeps away dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before. I feel stronger for my confession."

It was an unsparing confession:

"God has been abundantly kind to me. He has warned me the third time that there is not yet in India that truthful and non-violent atmosphere which, and which alone, can justify mass disobedience, which can be at all described as civil which means gentle, truthful, humble, knowing, wilful yet loving, never criminal and hateful.

"He warned me in 1919 when the Rowlatt Act agitation was started. Ahmedabad, Viramgam, Kheda erred; Amritsar and Kasur erred. I retraced my steps, called it a Himalayan miscalculation, humbled myself before God and man, and stopped not merely mass Civil Disobedience, but even my own which I know was intended to be civil and non-violent. "The next time it was through the events of Bombay that God gave a terrific warning. He made me eye-witness of the deeds of the Bombay mob on the 17th November. The mob acted in the interest of Non-co-operation. I announced my intention to stop the mass Civil Disobedience which was to be immediately started in Bardoli. The humiliation was greater than in 1919. But it did me good. I am sure that the nation gained by the stopping. India stood for truth and non-violence by the suspension.

"But the bitterest humiliation was still to come. Madras did give the warning, but I heeded it not. But God spoke clearly through Chauri Chaura....

"The tragedy of Chauri Chaura is really the index finger. It shows the way India may easily go, if drastic precautions be not taken. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps and re-establish an atmosphere of peace, re-arrange our programme and not think of starting mass Civil Disobedience until we are sure of peace being retained in spite of mass Civil Disobedience being started and in spite of Government provocation.

"Let the opponent glory in our humiliation or so-called defeat. It is better to be charged with cowardice and weakness than to be guilty of denial of our oath and sin against God. It is a million times better to appear untrue before the world than to be untrue to ourselves."

For him the suspension of civil disobedience was not penance enough. He must undergo a personal cleansing. He prayed to become a fitter instrument able to register the slightest variation in the moral atmosphere. He declared a five days' fast for himself and begged his co-workers not to follow the example. A fast undertaken for fuller self-expression, he wrote, for attainment of the spirit's supremacy over the flesh is a most powerful factor in one's evolution. He was the surgeon who had proved unable to deal with an admittedly dangerous case. He must either abdicate or acquire greater skill. The workers would be better engaged in the constructive activities than in fasting.

But the critics were not appeased or persuaded. Motilal Nehru and Lajpat Rai wrote bitterly from prison. At the All-India Congress Committee meeting Bengal and Maharashtra members reproached him in strong terms and threatened that their provinces would continue with civil disobedience despite his orders; Dr. Moonje moved a vote of censure against Gandhi. Gandhi would not permit anyone to oppose the vote by speech, but it was nevertheless heavily outvoted.

On 10th March he returned to Sabarmati, to his Ashram. On the night of the 13th he was arrested. There had been rumours of impending arrest for some time and Gandhi was not taken by surprise. The little family in the Ashram sang a favourite hymn. He took leave of them all one by one, and expressing himself happy at his arrest, he walked down the road



to where the Superintendent of Police was waiting for him. There was no disturbance in the country. Remarking on this an English nobleman said contemptuously: "Not a dog barked." Gandhi, in jail, thanked God.

## CHAPTER VI

### INDIA WAITS—THE TIDE EBBS AND FLOWS

MR. SHANKERLAL BANKER was arrested at the same time as Gandhi, and both prisoners were taken to Sabarmati Jail. They were charged on the next day, Banker being the publisher of *Young India* and in that capacity publishing seditious articles, and Gandhi with being the author of the articles in question.

The trial began on 18th March before Mr. C.N. Broomfield, I.C.S., District and Sessions Judge of Ahmedabad. As Gandhi entered a frail, serene, indomitable figure in a coarse and scanty loin-cloth, the entire Court rose in an act of spontaneous homage. When the magistrate asked Gandhi about his occupation he was startled to receive the reply "Farmer and Weaver", in slow clear tones, and with an emphatic accent.

The Judge explained the charges. The accused had brought or attempted to bring into hatred or contempt, had excited or attempted to excite disaffection towards His Majesty's Government established by law in British India. Both pleaded guilty. The Judge wished to proceed at once to the sentence, but the Prosecuting Counsel, Sir J. Strangman, would not be denied the right to state his case at length. Gandhi then made his statement, prefacing it with an endorsement of all that the Advocate-General had said against him. He spoke of his early years, of his struggles and services in South Africa, of his return to India and the bitter shocks occasioned by the Rowlatt Act, the Punjab atrocities, the betrayal of the Moslems. He had come reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. "I hold it to be a virtue," he declared, "to be disaffected towards a Government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before. Holding such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system." He had preached nothing but non-violence, he had taught that violent non-co-opera-

tion only multiplies evil and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. "I am here," he concluded, "to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent; or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is therefore injurious to the public weal."

Mr. Broomfield's judgment showed the English administrator at his best. There was no irony, no reproach, no doubting of the prisoner's sincerity. "Even those who differ from you in politics," the Judge said, "look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and of even saintly life." But he had made it impossible for any Government to leave him at liberty. The judgment would be based on the precedent of Tilak's case twelve years before. Gandhi would undergo six year's simple imprisonment. If events in India made it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release him, no one, Mr. Broomfield concluded, would be happier than himself. Mr. Banker received a sentence of eighteen months' imprisonment.

Gandhi considered it a privilege and an honour to have his name associated with that of Tilak, and thanked the Judge for his courtesy. As the Judge left the Court, Gandhi was surrounded by his friends, many sobbing and falling at his feet. He stood among them smiling and unperturbed, speaking a few words of encouragement. Then he left the Court with Shankerlal Banker to return to Sabarmati, to the Jail.

Mrs. Gandhi sent a message to the nation, emphasizing the appeal which Gandhi had made after his arrest. Workers must now concentrate on the constructive programme, above all they must give up foreign cloth and spin and weave their own materials.

On the 17th, the day before the trial, Gandhi had written a note to C.F. Andrews, his "dear Charlie", and had asked him not to seek permission to visit him in jail. That would be a

privilege, and he would have no privilege. "I am as happy as a bird," he wrote. The hardship was nothing to him. Prison life and fare were no simpler than he had been accustomed to, and he would have the precious privilege of solitude. Time to reflect, to meditate, to study, to set down a history of his work in South Africa, and of the steps by which Satyagraha had been evolved.

He had drawn up a detailed programme of study for the six years. "I used to sit down to my books," he said later, "with the delight of a young man of twenty-four, and forget my four and fifty years and my poor health." In the mornings he studied the *Gita*, the middle of the day was devoted to the *Koran*, and in the evenings he read the Bible with a Chinese christian. He made an intensive study of two Indian languages of which he was still ignorant, Urdu and Tamil. He read Western writers and thinkers, Carlyle, Ben Jonson, Walter Scott, Lord Bacon, Tolstoy, Emerson, Thoreau and Ruskin. But his main studies were always of religion. Apart from the scripture readings he made a careful study of the Mahabharata in the original text, Moslem writings—particularly accounts of the life of the Prophet and his companions—and of the writings of some Europeans, including the German mystic Jakob Bohme.

So the year passed away, but Gandhi did not lose his place in the hearts and minds of the Indian people although he was shut away from them in Yeravda Jail. Beyond India too, interest was stirring. In an American magazine there appeared a poem which asked:

"Who is it sits within his prison cell

The while his spirit goes astride the world?"

and the question remained to stir or trouble the consciences of men of goodwill in many nations.

As 1923 wore on Gandhi's health became worse. He had not recovered from his grave illness at the end of the Great War when he threw himself into the Non-co-operation campaigns in 1919, and there had been no respite during the three momentous years before his arrest. Even now he spared himself nothing, declining privileges, intent upon his studies, dictating his book, and praying and meditating to make himself a fitter instrument for the service of Truth which was his God, and India which was his country.

The crisis came at the beginning of 1924 when Gandhi had been in jail for nearly two years. On 13th January the Director of Information, Bombay, issued a statement that sent a thrill of alarm throughout the country. Gandhi had been suffering from abdominal pain and fever, he had been removed from Yeravda Jail to Sassoon Hospital, Poona, had undergone an operation for suppurating appendix and had stood it well. A later communique stated that his condition was as good as could be expected. The illness had been ignored until it was almost too late. When Ramdas Gandhi, alarmed at rumours of his father's illness, wired for news, a reply reached him on the day before the operation that his father was suffering from "ordinary fever", and that there was no cause for anxiety.

The operation saved him, and Gandhi who had so strongly denounced European medicine, and has warded in *Hind Swaraj* to abolish hospitals as a menace to the morality of society, was the first to thank Colonel Maddock, the Surgeon General, for his skill and care. Gandhi's opponents have never forgotten the incident and have made the most of the "inconsistency". But Gandhi's general view of the effect of hospitals on society did not, of course, exclude the possibility of real good in a particular case, any more than his denunciation of machinery and the Press made it impossible for him to use machinery to produce his newspaper warning the people against newspapers. In this case he might have argued that Western civilisation had only succeeded in undoing the evil brought about by the uncivilised practice of imprisonment. Had he been a free man able to exercise his spirit and his mind in action, his body would have remained healthy or would have been amenable to nature-cure, or would have sickened only as a result of his failure to control it. The relationship between body and mind is more subtle than most scientists and doctors will admit. Whatever the Western reader may make of Gandhi's drastic views on the medical profession, and on the cause of illness, it is significant that his own most serious illnesses have occurred when he came nearest to denying his own beliefs by co-operating in the Great War, first in London where he was incapacitated and had to return to India, and then in India where his recruiting campaign was cut short by a long illness that almost proved fatal; and now, when he had been forcibly prevented for

two years from continuing his life's work among the Indian masses.

He had been ill for six months before the operation. Andrews, just arrived from England, saw him in the middle of February, and was shocked even then by his emaciated appearance, although his condition had been much worse a week or so before. Soon afterwards Andrews wrote in a memorable article for *Young India*: "Extravagant durbars, royal visits, imperial pageants, British Empire Exhibitions, all draining away the wealth of the country, have become more frequent of late in order to captivate the waning attention of the common people. But the spiritual mind of India is not captivated by things so tawdry as these. Rather it pays silent homage to this one tired sufferer in the hospital at Poona, who has looked into the face of death without fear. For there is a ruler of India here, in this hospital, Mahatma Gandhi, whose sway is greater than all imperial power. His name will be remembered and sung by the village people long after the names of the modern governors in their palaces at New Delhi are forgotten. When all the buildings of Raisina have crumbled into ruins... the name of Mahatma Gandhi will still be taught by mothers to their little children as one of the greatest of India's saints and saviours. For there is a spiritual palace which Mahatma Gandhi has built up out of an eternal fabric. Its foundations are deeply and truly laid in the Kingdom of God. No oppression of the poor has gone to build it. Love and devotion and service to the poor are its golden decorations. No military pomp reigns within its borders, but only the peaceful harmony of human souls. No race or colour distinctions have any place in it. No clash of religious controversy mars its silence. Its empire is the heart."

Andrews wrote thus a few days after the morning early in February when he had sat in the hospital with Gandhi and Colonel Maddock had come in with good news. He was unconditionally released. The Mahatma had been quiet and unmoved. He asked if the Colonel would read the order to him, and having heard it he smiled and said, "I hope you will not mind my remaining your guest and your patient a little longer". Andrews was asked to go at once to Sabarmati to give the little community at the Ashram a personal message from Gandhi.

The next news he sent was to old Rustomji in Durban, the faithful friend who had worked with him in the South African struggle.

Soon he sent a long statement to Mahomed Ali, at that time President of the Congress. He was sorry, he said, that the Government had prematurely released him on account of his illness. Such a release could bring him no joy, no relief. He would say little about the political situation for he had no time as yet to study the position. But he thought it clear that "perplexing as the national problems were at the time of the Bardoli resolutions, they are far more perplexing today. It is clear that without unity between Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Parsis and Christians and other Indians all talk of Swaraj is idle. The unity which I fondly believed in 1922 had been nearly achieved, has, so far as Hindus and Moslems are concerned, I observe, suffered a severe check." He spoke too of the poverty of the masses and of the importance of handspinning. The wheel, he declared, would leave them little leisure for fighting among themselves. He could express no opinion on the vexed question of the entry of Congressmen to Legislative Councils and the Assembly.

The Khilafat question had come to an unexpected end in November 1922, when the Turkish Sultan had fled, and had been deposed not only as Sultan but also as Khalifa. His nephew was elected Khalifa, but Turkey now became a Republic and the Sultan ceased to exist. As the Congress history puts it, the Khilafat had been 'vaticanized'. In the same year there had been serious communal riots involving extensive destruction of life and property, and at the Muharram of 1923 there were further serious riots in Bengal and the Punjab.

The Gaya Congress session in December 1922 had seen a fierce struggle between two sections of the movement, the 'No-Changers' who wished to adhere to the constructive programme including boycott of the Legislatures set up under the 1919 Act, and the 'Pro-Changers', who contended that Congress should contest the elections, and either not take up the seats won, or use them to create a deadlock by moving votes of censure and voting to withhold supplies. The formidable leader of the 'Pro-Changers' was Gandhi's old opponent C.R. Das, strongly supported by Motilal Nehru. Das was President of the Cong-

ress at the time but despite all his efforts the Congress voted for 'No-Change'. Das resigned the Presidentship of Congress and became President of the Swaraj Party formed to carry out his own programme of Council-entry. But by the middle of May 1923 the Swarajists—as the 'Pro-Change'ers were now called—had captured the A.I.C.C., and the 'No-Change'ers on the Working Committee felt bound to resign. The Congress met in special session in September at Delhi, with Abul Kalam Azad as President, and sanctioned the policy of Council entry. Das and the Swarajists had won. Gandhi, still in prison, had suffered a defeat. He would never have agreed to sabotage the machinery as Das and Nehru wanted to do. He would either co-operate completely or not at all.

In December 1923 the Congress regular session was held at Cocanada and the last hopes of the 'No-Change'ers were dispelled. Mahomed Ali, who was chosen as President for the year, suggested that Gandhi would not object to Council-entry although he had in his pocket a message from Gandhi in which the Mahatma expressed the impossibility of judging the situation but added that there had been no change in his views since he had been imprisoned.

Early in March 1924 Gandhi was removed from the hospital and taken to a little bungalow on the palm-fringed beach at Juhu, north of Bombay. He was still very weak but before the end of the month he was working hard.

He would rise at 4 a.m. for prayers and read religious works. After another short sleep he would breakfast at 6 a.m. and take a walk on the verandah. Then he would deal with his correspondence with the help of shorthand-typists until mid-day. He would also find time to study political problems and see important politicians by appointment. By 4 p.m. he was ready to see a large number of visitors. About 6 o'clock he would take a forty minutes' walk along the beach with his beloved Charlie Andrews, and then work again until 8 p.m. when he retired for the night. He was already looking forward to resuming spinning each day as soon as he could sit up without fatigue.

At the beginning of April he resumed editorship of *Young India*. "I do not know whether my health can yet sustain the energy required for conducting the paper," he confessed in his first article, "but I cannot foresee. I can only dimly under-



stand God's purpose in bringing me out of my retirement in Yeravda." He had no new message, but he lived for India's freedom and would die for it, because it is part of Truth, and Truth is God. It was not nationalism in the narrow sense. "My patriotism is not exclusive; it is calculated not only not to hurt any other nation but to benefit all in the true sense of the word." That was true, for the way to India's freedom was the way of non-violence.

To Juhu came the leading Swarajists. Motilal Nehru, his son Jawaharlal and C.R. Das. Motilal Nehru and Das were the acknowledged leaders, but Jawaharlal Nehru who had been twice imprisoned during the Non-co-operation campaigns was becoming popular in nationalist circles. The younger Nehru inclined to his father's views, although he felt that Gandhi's decision to call off civil disobedience after Chauri Chaura "may have been right". Motilal and Das did not succeed in persuading Gandhi, although they could quote a number of examples of successful obstruction in the Assembly and the Provincial Councils. The budget for the year had been rejected, a resolution demanding a round table conference to settle the terms of India's freedom had been passed, and in Bengal supplies had been voted down. But, on the other hand, both in the Assembly and in the provinces, the Viceroy or the Governor 'certified' the budgets, and they became law. The gesture had been made. But there were no concrete results.

Gandhi did not succeed in influencing Jawaharlal to his point of view, although the younger Nehru saw the limitations of his father's policy. He left Juhu "a little disappointed, for Gandhiji did not resolve a single one of my doubts".

In May statements about the discussions were made public. Gandhi stated that he had not been able "to see eye to eye with the Swarajists", and added significantly: "I retain the opinion that Council-entry is inconsistent with Non-co-operation, as I conceive it. Nor is this difference a mere matter of interpretation of the word 'Non-co-operation' but relates to the essential mental attitude resulting in different treatment of vital problems." He would put no obstacles in the way of the Swarajists, but could not actively help them. He spoke once more of the urgency of handspinning, and foreshadowed pro-

posals for a drastic reorganisation of the Congress in this connection.

The nature of the changes was shown at the A.I.C.C. meeting in June. Instead of a subscription of four annas as a basis of membership of the Congress, Gandhi proposed that members should be obliged to pay in hand-spun yarn. There was a bitter struggle over this resolution and at last Das, Motilal Nehru, and the Swarajists walked out of the meeting, while Jawaharlal offered his resignation as Congress Secretary. The full resolution was passed, but Gandhi softened the terms subsequently to meet to some extent the feeling of the minority. The spinning franchise became an alternative form.

At the same meeting there was a struggle over a resolution condemning the murder of an Englishman by a patriotic young terrorist. Gandhi was so deeply moved by the reluctance of some of his colleagues to condemn the violent act unequivocally that he wept publicly. The realisation that Congress still had some sympathy with violence and his own weakened and exhausted condition were too much for him.

Control of Congress, it seemed, had passed into the hands of C.R. Das and the Nehrus. Gandhi, said many, was a spent force: it almost seemed that he had retired from politics. Das and Nehru had driven him into the background. "Such remarks," says Jawaharlal Nehru, the most candid and chivalrous of opponents, "have been repeated many times in the course of the last fifteen years and they have demonstrated every time how singularly ignorant our rulers are about the feelings of the Indian people. Ever since Gandhiji appeared on the Indian political scene, there has been no going back in popularity for him, so far as the masses are concerned. There has been a progressive increase in his popularity, and this process still continues."

Gandhi's heart was with the masses now, more than ever. He wanted to devote himself altogether to the revival of village industries, the fundamental work of easing the burden of poverty and hunger in the 700,000 villages which were the real India. But he could not turn once to this great work. Communal riots of increasing gravity broke out at Delhi, Gulbarga, Nagpur, Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Allahabad, Jubbulpore and—worst of all—at Kohat. Gandhi and Shaukat Ali were

appointed to report on the Kohat disturbances, and disagreed in their conclusions. Hindu-Moslem unity, one of Gandhi's finest dreams, which had seemed a reality in 1920, was now crumbling into ruins.

Andrews, who had never left his side during the long convalescence at Juhu, knew how his mind had been bent on going north to relieve the tension before it became too late to do so. Now that the disaster had occurred Gandhi spent night and day in sleepless watch and prayer, asking for Divine aid. At last he felt his decision was made. He determined, in spite of his weakness after the very serious illness of the spring, to undertake a twenty-one days' fast, beginning on 18th September 1924, as an act of penance on behalf of the sins and infirmities of his own people. "The simple news of it," Andrews wrote, "at once brought to an end the fatal riots which had been so frequent before. It also roused, as nothing else had done, the National leaders to deal with this one problem as a matter of life and death for India as a nation."

He lay there, in the house called *Dil-khush*, Heart's Joy, at the foot of the Ridge at Delhi, and looking towards the Ridge he could see a 'Mutiny Memorial' and Asoka's Pillar, with its edict of toleration and non-violence. Between the frail suffering man on the terrace, and the two memorials on the towering Ridge, the European golfers were coming and going on the new links. Andrews, seeing it all, felt a rush of emotion. To his mind came the words from the Book of Lamentations—"It is nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

On the twelfth day the crisis came. Both the doctors considered that his life was in immediate danger, and pressed him to take food. Andrews too tried to persuade him. It was his day of silence, and he wrote on his slate in answer to their entreaties, "Have faith in God". Still they urged him to break his fast, to save his life. Again the frail hand wrote. "You have forgotten the power of prayer." They watched at his bedside through a long night of storms and thunder, and in the morning he showed no signs of weakening. When the twenty-one days were up he was radiant.

The household met for morning prayers at 4 a.m. It was a dark chilly morning with no moon, but the morning star shone

clear above the Ridge. Then at mid-day the fast was to be broken. Hakim Ajmal Khan was there, both doctor and friend; Mohamed Ali, his tender and loving Moslem host; Swami Shraddhananda, sitting at the foot of the bed, his eyes closed in prayer; Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das, Abul Kalam Azad, Shaukat Ali and many more. There was a reading from the *Koran*, a favourite Christian hymn sung by Andrews, some passages from Hindu Scriptures.

"Before the actual breaking of the fast," wrote C.F. Andrews in his unforgettable description of the scene, "Mahatma Gandhi turned to his friends. He spoke to them; and as he spoke his emotion was so deep that in his bodily weakness his voice could hardly be heard except by those who were nearest of all to him. He told them how for thirty years Hindu-Moslem unity had been his chief concern, and he had not yet succeeded in achieving it." Then Dr. Ansari brought forward a glass of orange-juice, and the fast was broken.

At the end of September, during the fast, a Unity Conference met and the communal leaders pledged themselves to make the utmost endeavours to prevent further outbreaks and avoid provocation. For a time there was peace.

In November Gandhi reached an important agreement with Das and Motilal Nehru. In effect it divided the Congress into two parts, one led by the Swarajists to work within the Councils, the other under Gandhi's direction to work for the constructive programme among the people, and particularly to promote handspinning. Since the promotion of this policy was also the avowed aim of the Swarajists, the Congress still held together, with toleration of the differences of method. The agreement also embraced the spinning franchise, although a further amendment a few months later again relegated hand-spun yarn to the position of an alternative subscription, most members preferring to obtain membership by the payment of four annas.

At the end of the year Gandhi presided at the Congress annual session at Belgaum. This was the first occasion on which he had filled the office of president, but it did not indicate a return to active politics. In July 1924 he had founded the All-India Spinners' Association, and for the next four years his work was to be preaching and organising in the villages.

Jawaharlal Nehru remained Congress Secretary, although not in full agreement with Gandhi.

Gandhi's advocacy of hand-spinning has been generally misunderstood and frequently misrepresented. Critics pretend that his 'hatred of machinery' drove him to preach an economic system in which the machine has no place. His friends, even more disastrously, hint at an esoteric spiritual significance, in flat contradiction to Gandhi's extremely clear statement of his case. "The sole claim advanced on its behalf," he said, "is that it alone offers an immediate, practicable and permanent solution of the problems of problems that confronts India—namely, the enforced idleness for nearly six months in the year of an overwhelming majority of India's population, owing to lack of a suitable occupation supplementary to agriculture, and the chronic starvation of the masses that results therefrom. There would be no place for the spinning-wheel in the national life of India, comparatively small as the remuneration that can be derived from it is, if these two factors were not there."

To suggestions that he was trying to put the clock back by attempting to replace mill-cloth and yarn by hand-spun and woven material, he answers:

"Now I am making no such attempt at all. I have no quarrel with the mills. My views are incredibly simple. India requires nearly 13 yards of cloth per head per year. She produces, I believe, less than half the amount. India grows all the cotton she needs. She exports several million bales of cotton to Japan and Lancashire, and receives much of it back in manufactured calico, although she is capable of producing all the cloth and all the yarn necessary for supplying her wants by hand-weaving and hand-spinning. India needs to supplement her main occupation, agriculture, with some other employment. Hand-spinning is the only such employment for millions. It was the national employment a century ago. It is not true to say that economic pressure and modern machinery destroyed hand-spinning and hand-weaving. This great industry was destroyed or almost destroyed by extraordinary and immoral means adopted by the East India Company. This national industry is capable of being revived by exertion and a change in the na-

tional taste without damaging the mill industry. Increase of mills is no present remedy for supplying the deficiency. The deficiency can be easily supplied only by hand-spinning and hand-weaving. If this employment were revived it would prevent sixty million rupees from being annually drained from the country and distribute the amount among lacs of poor women in their own cottages. I therefore consider Swadeshi as an automatic, though partial, solution of the problem of India's grinding poverty. It also constitutes a ready-made insurance policy in times of scarcity or raid."

In April 1925 his journeyings brought him to Vaikom where he helped to bring about a settlement in a particularly interesting and significant Satyagraha. Brahmins in this Travancore village had for centuries refused to allow low-caste 'untouchables' to use the main highway that passed close by the Brahmin quarter and temple. The local leader had gone north to consult Gandhi during his convalescence and he had directed the campaign from his sickbed by letters and telegrams. First, a young Syrian Christian, George K. Joseph, took in 'untouchable' volunteer along the forbidden road. They were both beaten severely by the Brahmins, and when Joseph attempted to repeat the action he was arrested for encouraging trespass. Other volunteers took his place and there were many more arrests, with sentences ranging up to a year's imprisonment.

Eventually the police determined to prevent the reformers from entering the road, and a cordon and barrier was formed across it. The Satyagrahis took up their positions opposite the barrier and for many weeks remained there in an attitude of prayer. When the monsoon burst upon the country, the road was flooded and the police took to boats. Gandhi exhorted the Satyagrahis to stay at their posts without fatigue, without despair, without anger or irritation, and with forbearance towards their opponents and the Government. The volunteers remained, sometimes up to their shoulders in water.

In the autumn of 1925, after Gandhi's visit, the Brahmins at last relented; the sixteen months' struggle was over. Thenceforth the road was open to all. "We cannot," the Brahmins declared, "any longer resist the prayers that have been made to us and we are ready to receive the untouchables." This triumph

Winslow and Elwin declare, led to the opening of roads all over Travancore.

From the South Gandhi turned towards Bengal, Das's stronghold. Das himself was ill, but his political outlook was more than confident. He told the Press that he saw signs of a change of heart everywhere, the world was tired of conflict and wanted construction and consolidation. Gandhi saw "no real trace yet, of any change of heart". But he also declared Das to be his attorney. Gandhi was content to be the nominal and not the real president of the Congress. He was deliberately leaving policy in the hands of the Swarajists who had for the moment a majority. On 16th June Das died at Darjeeling, and the leadership of the Swarajists passed to Motilal Nehru. Gandhi toured the vast province collecting ten lakhs of rupees to buy Das's house for the nation, to be used as a hospital for women and children. It was a fitting tribute to a great opponent.

In August Gandhi completed his withdrawal from the Congress leadership. The Swarajists had rejected his programme but demanded his leadership, they would not let him resign from the presidentship. Now he wrote: "I must no longer stand in the way of the Congress being developed and guided by educated Indians rather than by one like myself who has thrown in his lot entirely with the masses, and who has fundamental differences with the mind of educated India as a body. I still want to act upon them but not leading the Congress. The best way in which I can help that activity is by removing myself out of the way, and by concentrating myself solely upon constructive work with the help of the Congress and in its name, and that too, only so far as educated Indians will permit me to do." As President of the A.I.C.C. he refused to allow the policy of the Swarajists in the Councils to be called in question, leading Rajendra Prasad to ask if there was some pact between Gandhi and the elder Nehru. But the Cawnpore Congress in December 1925, showed that the Swarajists' triumph was by no means final. Step by step Nehru and others had been led from the policy of obstruction to a policy that became known as Responsive Co-operation. Gandhi spoke only for five-minutes. In reviewing his five years' work, he declared, he had not one item to retrace or one statement to take back. "Today I would commence Civil Disobedience if I thought that

the fire and fervour are there in the people. But alas! they are not."

In November 1925 Gandhi discovered misbehaviour among the boys and girls of the Ashram and in order to set them right fasted for seven days.

At Cawnpore Gandhi vowed himself to political silence for one year, and to immobility. As the year wore on the struggle in the Councils grew more bitter, and communal riots reached a new pitch of frenzy and violence in Calcutta. The spirit which had unified the country was gone, everything seemed to be sinking into confusion, despair and a dull acquiescence in British rule. When the year was over and the Congress gathered again at Gauhati, on the banks of the Brahmaputra, Gandhi's hut stood a little apart from the city of hand-spun *khaddar* tents and pavilions.

On his way there, on Christmas Eve, he had gone to the door of his railway carriage at a wayside station to appeal to the surging crowds, and a telegram had been thrust into his hand. Shraddhananda was dead, assassinated on his sick-bed by a Moslem fanatic. Shraddhananda, the great Hindu leader at Delhi in the Non-Cooperation Campaigns. Shraddhananda, broken-hearted at the Bardoli decision to suspend Civil Disobedience after the Chauri Chaura disaster. Shraddhananda, sitting at the foot of the bed, his eyes closed in prayer, in the house called *Dil-khush*, on the morning when the fast was to be broken. Shraddhananda, dead. Gokhale, Tilak, Das, Shraddhananda, all gone.

Gandhi threw himself back into his village work. During 1927 he would go to Bihar, Maharashtra, Madras, United Provinces, Bengal and Orissa. He had only one message now—hand-spinning. He could no longer believe in his power to bridge the gulf between the Hindu and Moslem communal fanatics. "I said . . . that the problem had passed out of human hands, and that God has taken it into his own. May be the statement springs from my egotism. But I do not think so. I have ample reason for it. With my hand on my breast I can say that not a minute in my life am I forgetful of God. For over twenty years I have been doing everything that I have done as in the presence of God. Hindu-Moslem unity I had made a mission of my life. I worked for it in South Africa. I toiled for it



here. I did penance for it, but God was not satisfied. God did not want me to take any credit for the work. And so I have now washed my hands. I am helpless. I have exhausted all my effort. But as I am a believer in God, as I never for a moment lose faith in Him, as I content myself with the joy and sorrow that He wills for me, I may feel helpless, but I never lose hope. Something within me tells me that Hindu-Moslem unity must come and will come sooner than we might dare to hope, that God will one day force it on us, in spite of ourselves. That is why I said that it has passed into the hands of God.... But how am I to prevail upon you today to cast off all fear, hatred and distrust? Shradhdhananda was not the enemy of the Moslems. He was a warrior, he had the courage of his convictions. Let us Hindus and Moslems both wash the sins of our heart with his blood."

After a short tour, Gandhi fell ill. It was as though India's ills overwhelmed him. The Council situation had now become a stalemate. The tide of communal violence was still rising. Lord Irwin told the Legislature in August that there had been 25 riots, 250 had been killed and ten times as many injured.

By the end of June Gandhi was able to look forward to resuming the tour in easy stages. "I shall not be able to sustain the strain to which I seemed to be equal up to the end of March. Processions and noises must be abandoned and people should be repeatedly warned against crowding round me and shouting and touching my feet." One meeting a day, and an informal talk with local volunteers, he could attempt.

So he went among his people again, because they wanted him and he wanted to know them. He delivered his simple message in a few words and it penetrated the mass mind slowly but surely.

In August there was disaster of a new kind. Large tracts of land in Kheda, Bharuch, Baroda and the neck of land between Gujarat and Kathiawar were flooded. Hardly a house was left standing, crops and cattle were swept away and many human beings survived for a week, without food, clinging to tree-tops. Thousands lost home, belongings, employment. Only two items of news from the stricken area warmed Gandhi's heart. Vallabhbhai Patel was leading the relief work there,

labouring indefatigably, sleeping only three hours a night; and there were many authenticated reports of friendship and heroism between Hindus and Moslems. Calamity had for a while wiped out the communal madness in one part of India.

In November he was in Mangalore when he received a summons from the Viceroy. He cancelled his tour programme at once and travelled a thousand miles to Delhi where he was handed a document. There was no further business.

The document was an announcement regarding the Simon Commission, the Statutory Commission appointed under the 1919 Act to consider the possibility of the further extension of responsible Government. There were to be no Indians on it at all. From Delhi he dashed South to spend the last three weeks of the month in Ceylon, and then returned to Madras for the annual Congress session in December. He did not attend the meetings of the Working Committee, but he went to the open sessions. The Congress passed a strong resolution calling for a complete boycott of the Simon Commission, since the absence of Indians from it was taken as an insult and an ill-omen. Jawaharlal Nehru, just back from Europe, was able to obtain an alteration in the Congress Creed which Gandhi had often opposed when it was introduced in earlier years. "This Congress," the Creed now ran, "declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete National Independence."

At the end of January 1928 Gandhi returned to the Ashram for the wedding of his third son, Ramdas Gandhi. The bride and groom were busy before the ceremony which began at eight in the morning. They fasted, cleaned the well-basin and the cowshed, watered the trees, engaged in hand-spinning and read a chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The ceremony consisted in a vow of faithfulness and dedication to service taken before the sacrificial fire in the presence of the elders. "You have both had part of your training here," Gandhi told them, in a short address. "Let your lives be consecrated to the service of the Motherland, and toil away until you wear out your bodies. We are pledged to poverty. You will therefore both earn your bread in the sweat of your brow as poor people do. You will help each other in daily toil and rejoice in it." Only three months later the Ashram suffered a sad loss. Maganlal Gandhi, a relative who had been with Gandhi in South Africa and had

become one of his dearest companions in the Ashram, died.

Gandhi had been in poor health again. Several times he had broken down under the strain of his tours and now he was compelled to take a respite from travels and the more onerous public duties. He took the opportunity to renew the simple dietetic experiments which had absorbed much of his attention in South Africa, on Tolstoy Farm, and the results of which he had used in a booklet published some years before, entitled *A Guide to Health*.

In March the six years' sentence passed on him in 1922 expired. At the time of his premature release in 1924 Gandhi had said that it brought him no joy, he regretted he should be set free because of illness. He had felt under some constraint not to take an active part in politics for the remainder of the six years, and this as much as his wish to respect the opinions of his opponents in the Congress had determined his withdrawal in favour of Das and the Swarajists. Now he was free again, and the time for his return was at hand. Nehru, who had been in Europe for a while, noted: "There seemed to be a new impulse moving the people forward, a new stir that was equally present in the most varied groups. Probably the change had been going on gradually during my long absence from the country; it struck me as very considerable on my return."

One day there were visitors from Bardoli. Many of the South African Satyagrahis were from Bardoli and in the campaigns of 1921-22 it had been selected by Gandhi as the district in which positive Civil Disobedience was to be launched, only to be disappointed at the last moment by his decision to postpone it after the Chauri-Chaura violence.

After Gandhi had been imprisoned the Congress workers in Gujarat, headed by Vallabhbhai Patel, had worked intensively to carry out the constructive programme in Bardoli, so that "it might vindicate itself in history as the first place for Civil Disobedience chosen by Gandhiji". Now here were Kalyanji and Kunvarji, the two brothers who were mainly responsible for inviting Gandhi to select Bardoli as his first field of operations and who had been working in that taluka all these years, sent by Vallabhbhai to seek guidance. The story they told as they walked along beside him was all too familiar. Contrary to the

advice of the Joint Parliamentary Committee appointed to consider the Government of India Bill, 1919, and contrary to a resolution of the Legislative Council of the Bombay Presidency in 1924, the Bombay Government in 1927 had raised the rate of the land tax nominally by 22 per cent, but in actual application in some instances over 60 per cent.

Under the 1919 Act land revenue was 'a reserved subject'. That meant it was beyond the control of the provincial Legislature. In 1873 a High Court had decided an appeal against assessment in favour of a peasant and against the Government Settlement Officer, with the result that a Bombay Revenue Jurisdiction Act had been passed excluding the jurisdiction of civil courts in matters of assessments. Thus there was virtually no control over the Executive and no appeal to an independent tribunal was possible.

In this case the peasants claimed that the investigation upon which the increase had been based was wholly inadequate, that the tax official's report was inaccurate and carelessly compiled, and that the increase was unwarranted and unjust. They asked the Governor to appoint an independent and impartial committee of enquiry to hold a thorough public investigation, and were willing to abide by the result of such an enquiry.

The local leaders had gone to Vallabhbhai for help, and at first he was reluctant to intervene. They came again, with renewed pleas, and he sent them back with stern warnings of the suffering that would be entailed in Satyagraha. Still they pleaded, and now they had come at Patel's wish to Gandhi himself. While they talked Vallabhbhai Patel himself joined them, and in answer to Gandhi's questions he said he had studied the case and had no doubt that the cause was just. "Well then," Gandhi decided, "there is nothing more to be considered. Victory to Gujarat!"

It was a victory. The result was predictable from the tone of the speeches on either side. Vallabhbhai was superb, and the peasants adored him. He in turn humbly acknowledged himself "responsible to the man of Sabarmati", for he was using Gandhi's weapon of Satyagraha and he must not fail. Vallabhbhai was the son of an agriculturist, he spoke in their idiom and was tireless and fearless as he moved among them. To one of the numerous Liberal friends who tried prematurely to bring about

an end to the struggle he wrote simply: "I would have a glorious defeat rather than an ignominious compromise." "Your fight," he told the peasants, "is not for a few lakhs of rupees, but for a principle. If you learn how to combine and resist a Government, when it is unjust, in a peaceful manner, you will leave to your children a heritage that is worth crores of rupees. You are fighting for self respect which ultimately leads to Swaraj. You peasants are always oppressed, always trampled upon. You eat the bread of toil, your life is an unbroken tale of hardship and suffering. But your suffering is sterile because it is the result of ignorance. Why should you not do true penance by undergoing a tithe of that suffering intelligently and with a clear knowledge of its spiritual significance? If you do that, if you are pure, gods will throw incense on your sacrifice and tyrants and despots will cower before you." Gandhi, watching from a distance, saw that "Vallabhbhai found his God (*Vallabh*) in Bardoli".

On the Government side there was a display of the insolence of office. Patel, who was called by the people themselves 'The Peasants' *Sardar*', and whom the Government had publicly praised a few months before for his heroic relief work in the floods (which had saved large sums of revenue), was called an 'outsider', and the officials spoke insultingly of swarms of agitators living on the people. Single words sometimes tell us more than histories. That a foreign and arbitrary Government could find it possible to describe a beloved patriotic leader of high standing in the public life of the nation as an 'outsider' is almost unbelievable. But they did; and in doing it they showed the bankruptcy of their position.

They did not give way easily. They brought in Pathan ruffians from Bombay, they seized and sold movable property, they took away the buffaloes when they could get them, they declared lands forfeit and auctioned territories worth many times the value of the entire assessment for the district at absurd prices to any lick-spittle who could be persuaded to bid for them. Vallabhbhai was undismayed. "Challenge the Government to take up your land and carry it, if they can, to England," he said. He directed the peasants to remain on their land and to sow their crops as before. No one came to eject them from the forfeited lands, but a number of the 250 volunteers who had

been enrolled to work among a population of 87,000 were arrested on preposterous charges and convicted to long terms of imprisonment for such offences as sitting on a public road watching the Collector's house.

Seven members of the Legislative Council resigned in protest against the Government's repressive policy, and sixty-three *patels* (village headmen) and eleven *talatis* (subordinate officials) in Bardoli also resigned. The Hon. V.J. Patel, President of the Legislative Assembly, representing Gujarat, appealed to the Viceroy to intervene, and publicly gave Rs. 1,000 a month to the campaign fund. V.J. Patel was Vallabhbhai Patel's brother; evidently another outsider.

The Bombay Government finally delivered an ultimatum on 23rd July, the source of which was plainly indicated by a simultaneous statement by Lord Winterton in the British House of Commons. "If the conditions mentioned by Sir Leslie Wilson in the Bombay Legislative Council today as regards Bardoli are not satisfied, the Bombay Government have full support of the Government of India in enforcing compliance with law and crushing the movement which would clearly then be exposed as one directed to coercing Government and not representing reasonable grievances."

The ultimatum demanded that the new assessment should be paid at once or that the additional 22 per cent should be paid into the treasury pending an enquiry which would be made by a Revenue Officer into disputed questions of facts and figures only. Patel scored heavily by pointing out the utterly illogical nature of the demand. First pay, then we will consider whether the payment asked for was fair. He asked for the discharge of the Satyagrahi prisoners, the restoration of lands sold or forfeited, the current price of seized movables to be refunded, and all dismissals and punishments remitted. If this were done he would accept even an official enquiry, provided it was open and impartial and of a judicial nature before which the people might appear. Gandhi and Patel together undertook that if such an enquiry were announced the campaign would be called off and the old assessment paid without delay, pending the investigation.

On August 2, Gandhi came to Bardoli. He had been ready to come at any time, but would not embarrass Patel

by an untimely visit. He came now to observe, and would do nothing without Vallabhbhai Patel's approval.

Then the end came suddenly. A number of Members of the Legislative Council gave an almost meaningless assurance for which the Government asked. Patel made it clear that he regarded this statement as untruthful, and reiterated his own minimum terms for settlement. But the assurance saved the Government's face and made it possible for them to announce an enquiry in the very words of Patel's ultimatum. Within a short while the prisoners were free, the lands restored, the village officials reinstated and the enquiry in progress. It was successful in more ways than one. It vindicated all the complaints of inadequate and inaccurate statistics, on which the increased assessment had been calculated, and recommended an increase of 5.7 per cent instead of 22 per cent. The Indians were not in agreement, holding that the evidence showed plainly not only that no increase could be justified but that a substantial reduction was necessary in many cases. But the principle of independent enquiry had been established. The English Officers, Mr. Broomfield and Mr. Maxwell, did much to redeem English behaviour in Bardoli by their honesty and candour in criticising the work of the Assessment and Revenue officials, and were enthusiastic in their praise of the collaboration of the 'agitators' whose impartial assistance in accumulating evidence was invaluable to them. The Satyagrahis had shown themselves as excellent in co-operation as they were implacable in resistance to grave injustice.

Writing of the events of the year, Jawaharlal Nehru observes: "Fifteen years' stress on non-violence has changed the whole background in India and made the masses much more indifferent to, and even hostile to, the idea of terrorism as a method of political action. Even the classes from which the terrorists are usually drawn, the lower middle-classes and intelligentsia, have been powerfully affected by the Congress propaganda against methods of violence. Their active and impatient elements, who think in terms of revolutionary action, also realise fully now that revolution does not come through terrorism, and that terrorism is an outworn and profitless method which comes in the way of real revolutionary action."

Nowhere was the fact better revealed than in the increasingly serious clashes with the authorities over the boycott of the Simon Commission. The Commission had landed in Bombay on February 3, and an all-India hartal had been observed. The boycott was maintained and wherever the Commission went they were met by black flags and crowds shouting "Go back Simon". In Madras the police opened fire on a crowd killing and injuring a number of people, and there was conflict between police and students in Calcutta and elsewhere. The climax came at Lahore where one of the national leaders, Lala Lajpat Rai, standing by the road-side in front of thousands of demonstrators, was assaulted and beaten on the chest with a baton by a young English police officer. On November 8, Gandhi received a wire from 'The Lion of the Punjab' in answer to his anxious enquiry: "Thanks. Assault unprovoked and deliberate. Received two severe injuries but not serious, one on left chest, other on shoulder, other blows warded off by friends . . . . No cause for anxiety." The Punjab Government refused to apologise for the assault. On 22nd November Gandhi once more had the sad task of writing an epitaph for a friend. Lajpat Rai was dead. It can scarcely be doubted that the assault hastened his end.

The loss of Lajpat Rai increased the vigour of the demonstrations against the Simon Commission, and at Lucknow Jawaharlal Nehru was involved in one of the infamous lathi charges by mounted police as he passed with sixteen followers along an unfrequented street. He has given an unforgettable account of the lathi charges in Lucknow in his autobiography.

In October Gandhi had disturbed the orthodox Hindus by killing a sick calf at his Ashram. The unfortunate animal was injured and doctors declared that it had no hope of recovery. Ahimsa and the Hindu doctrine of cow-protection strictly forbade slaughter. Gandhi discussed the matter with his little community, and despite some opposition his compassion for the suffering animal led him to direct the doctor to administer a poison injection which killed the calf within two minutes.

All-Party Conferences and an important Committee under the leadership of Motilal Nehru had during the course of the year drawn up a Constitution for India on which there was virtual agreement. Gandhi had supported the proposal that Motilal



should be the next President of the Congress, and the elder Nehru presided at the Calcutta session in December. The Constitution was India's reply to the unrepresentative and unwanted Simon Commission. India was giving her own opinion on the matter, and in a resolution moved by Gandhi and slightly amended, the Congress pledged itself to adopt the Constitution in its entirety if it was accepted by the British Parliament within one year. The Constitution would have given India Dominion status, although it was made clear that propaganda for complete Independence would continue. If the Constitution were rejected, or if it were not accepted by 31st December 1929, the Congress would organise non-violent non-co-operation.

The Passing of the resolution marked Gandhi's return to active leadership. He had intended to go to Europe in 1929, but now he felt he must stay in India. "I have no voice from within prompting me to go," he said in February. "On the contrary, having put a constructive resolution before the Congress and having received universal support, I feel that I would be guilty of desertion if I now went away to Europe. It may be that those who voted for the resolution never meant to carry it out. It may be that I shall have nothing to do during the year in respect of the programme, but I feel that it is not for me to reason thus. I must not lose faith in the workers. A voice from within tells me that I must not only hold myself in readiness to do what comes my way, but I must even think out and suggest means for working out what, to me, is a great programme. Above all, I must prepare myself for the next year's struggle whatever shape it may take."

## CHAPTER VII

### INDIA'S DEMAND—THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN AND THE TRUCE

ONCE more Gandhi resumed his travels among the villages. At Calcutta in March he arranged a bonfire of foreign cloth. He was charged with creating nuisance by disobeying or abetting defiance of an order designed to prohibit the burning of straw in public! Returning from his tour in Burma to face the indictment, Gandhi was solemnly tried and fined one rupee.

He went on to Andhradesa and the United Provinces. He worked without pausing through the hottest months of the year, addressing meetings of 10,000 to 25,000 every few miles; the principal meeting of the day might even have exceeded 100,000. There could be no doubt now, if there ever had been real doubt, that Gandhi was the acknowledged leader of the Indian people. But in September, when ten Provinces voted for him to be the next President of Congress he refused, and Jawaharlal Nehru took his place.

At the end of October 1929 Lord Irwin issued a statement announcing the willingness of the British Government, now a Labour Government, to meet representatives, both of British India and the States to seek agreement for the final proposals to be submitted to Parliament and later embodied in a new India Act. A mixed gathering of Indian leaders replied, welcoming the announcement and saying they thought it vital to the proposed Conference that a policy of general conciliation should be adopted, political prisoners released, and Congress as the largest political organisation given a proportionate representation in the Conference. Gandhi wrote that he was 'dying for co-operation'. He could wait for a Dominion Constitution if he could get Dominion Status in action, if there was a real change of heart among the British rulers.

On December 23, Vithalbhai Patel (Vallabhbhai Patel's brother) arranged a meeting at his house between Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Mr. Jinnah, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Viceroy. Lord Irwin had just narrowly escaped assassination in a train

when a time bomb had exploded, wrecking his dining-car. But he was jovial and unperturbed by the danger of the morning. Gandhi began by asking for an assurance that the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis of full Dominion Status. The Viceroy could not promise this. The negotiations had failed in the first hour.

On Christmas Day the Lahore Congress opened under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. The main resolution appreciated the efforts of the Viceroy to achieve a settlement, but in the light of the conversations Congress could not participate in the proposed Round Table Conference. The Constitution drafted by the Nehru Committee had lapsed, the year was up, and the first step in the struggle was resignation from the Councils. The objective was Complete Independence, and the A.I.C.C. was empowered to launch Civil Disobedience. The era of the Swarajists was over. For six years they had fought from within the Councils, contrary to the programme agreed before Gandhi's arrest, and to his judgment after release in 1924. The 'No-Changers' had won the last battle, and Gandhi, although not the nominal president, was the acknowledged leader. •

As a preliminary measure, the Congress declared a boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures, and called upon Congress members of those bodies to tender their resignations. Motilal Nehru himself made the call. "Nearly all of them came out in a body," wrote Jawaharlal, "a very few refusing to do so, although this involved a breach of their election promises."

January 26 was fixed as National Independence Day, when a pledge of independence was to be taken. All over the country the national tricolour flag was hoisted, and hundreds of thousands of people signed the pledge of independence. On the previous day, the Viceroy in a speech before the Legislature had done his best to make the Government's policy seem just and necessary. But the most he could say was that the coming Round Table Conference "will be convened for the purpose of elucidating and harmonizing opinion, and so affording guidance to His Majesty's Government on whom the responsibility must subsequently devolve of drafting proposals for the consideration of Parliament". British statesmen still regarded India's freedom as a British question to be decided in Britain by the British Houses of Parliament. Certain Indians might be given a trip to London,

encouraged to state their opinions, and so demonstrate to Parliament and public the extent of the disagreement between Princes and people, Hindus and Moslems. Some of the things they said might prove helpful. But the British must decide, the responsibility was with Whitehall. In this matter the Labour Government was no different from the Tories. Gandhi, at least, was not surprised. During the first weeks of his convalescence at Juhu in 1924, a journalist had asked his opinion of the new Labour Government. "It has a precarious existence," Gandhi had said. "It has to depend on the good-will of other parties, and if it isn't to break in pieces, it has to conciliate its very exacting constituents and follow out its special domestic programme. I have no doubt that in trying to acquire the support of the majority of the House in pushing through its domestic programme, it will not hesitate to sacrifice its principles regarding Imperial policy affecting India, or Indians in South Africa and Kenya. In fact, I should not be surprised, seeing it is so weak, if the Labour Government does worse even than its predecessors so far as Indian policy is concerned."

So it proved, from the Indian point of view. The vague but exciting statements about self-determination made during the Great War had led to nothing but the measure of provincial autonomy (in which all the principal subjects were 'reserved' to the British) and the ignominious 'talking shop' at the Centre. For ten years this not very generous 'instalment of self-government' had been endured unwillingly, then the statutory commission had been appointed. No Indians were to have a hand in the drafting of the Report. No guarantee could be given that the nation's demand for nothing less than Dominion Status would be the basis of the Round Table Conference. The British would decide, and in view of the way they had flouted Indian opinion and persecuted India's leaders, not much could be expected from Whitehall.

Gandhi considered that Irwin's statement made the position quite clear. Still he offered to put off Civil Disobedience if Britain would grant the substance, if not the outward form of self-government. He asked MacDonald and Irwin for eleven things: total prohibition, restoration of the exchange rate to 1s. 4d., 50 per cent reduction of land revenue, abolition of the Salt Tax, reduction of military expenditure by 'at least 50 per cent to begin

with', reduction of civil service salaries by half, a protective tariff against foreign cloth, enactment of a Coastal Reservation Bill, discharge of all political prisoners not condemned for murder or attempted murder, abolition or popular control of the C.I.D., and issue of licences for fire-arms for self-defence, subject to popular control. "Let the Viceroy satisfy us," he pleaded, "with regard to these very simple but vital needs of India. He will then hear no talk of Civil Disobedience.."

It was not an absurd demand from a people whose average income, including the millionaires and the wealthy Princes, was three pence per day.

Simultaneously the Working Committee issued a terrible indictment. "The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. . . . We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four-fold disaster to our country."

In February the committee met at Sabarmati. Civil Disobedience, it resolved, should be initiated and controlled by those who believe in non-violence for the purpose of achieving *Purna Swaraj*, an article of faith. Even so there were doubts. Was the country prepared for mass Civil Disobedience? Others wanted an assurance that Civil Disobedience would not again be called off if there was some local outbreak. Gandhi recognised that the responsibility devolving on him was the greatest he had ever undertaken. There was danger in Civil Disobedience, the danger of an outbreak of violence. But this time there could be no turning back, the struggle in freedom's battle of non-violence against violence, no matter from what quarter, must go on. As Jawaharlal Nehru saw, the country was disciplined now, and there was a clearer appreciation of the nature of the struggle. The masses knew, too, that Gandhi "was terribly in earnest about non-violence. There could be no doubt about that now as there probably was in the minds of some people ten years before." The lesson of Chauri-Chaura had been learned, and the self-control of the volunteers who had suffered under lathi charges during the boycott of the Simon Commission had been encouraging. Still control must be in the hands of those who believed in non-violence as a faith. Volunteers might be accepted if they

would honestly follow non-violence as a policy. Purists may deem this a compromise, but Gandhi, like Confucius, might have said, "In sanctioning a man's entry here, I sanction nothing he may do on his withdrawal. Why indeed, be so extreme? When a man cleanses himself and comes to me I may accept his present cleanness without becoming sponsor of his past." But the volunteers must be self-controlled. On February 27, 1930 Gandhi published his code of discipline in *Young India*.

The Satyagrahi must harbour no anger, must suffer the anger of his opponent, putting up with assaults but refusing to retaliate. He must refrain from insults and from swearing, he must protect opponents from insults or attack even at the risk of his life. As a prisoner he must behave in an exemplary manner, as a member of his unit in the struggle he must obey the orders of his leaders (although he may resign from the unit in the event of serious disagreement). He may not expect guarantees for maintenance of his dependants.

The moment for launching Civil Disobedience could not be delayed. The tension in the country was at its height, and because of lack of resistance to deeply-felt injustices violence might break out. The dynamic must be directed at once into non-violent channels.

On March 2, Gandhi once more addressed the Viceroy, in a letter written from the Ashram at Sabarmati. He gave a long, reasoned, moderate statement of India's grievances. He spoke particularly of the terrific pressure of Land Revenue, the burden of the Salt Tax which fell most heavily on the very poor, the iniquity of the large drink and drug revenue, and the extravagant and ruinous administration. "Take your own salary," he wrote, "It is over Rs. 21,000 per month, besides many other indirect additions. The British Prime Minister gets £ 5,000 per year, i.e., over Rs. 5,400 per month at the present rate of exchange. You are getting over Rs. 700 per day against India's average income of less than 2 annas per day. The Prime Minister gets Rs. 180 per day against Great Britain's average income of nearly Rs. 2 per day. Thus, you are getting much over five thousand times India's average income. The British Prime Minister is getting only ninety times Britain's average income. On bended knee, I ask you to ponder over this phenomenon....." He pleaded for an announcement in the next nine days that the

Government would remedy some of these evils. Otherwise he would launch Civil Disobedience by a symbolic breach of the Salt Laws. The letter was taken to Delhi by a young Englishman, Reginald Reynolds. The reply was only an expression of regret that Gandhi should be "contemplating a course of action which was clearly bound to involve violation of the Law and danger to the public peace".

Gandhi's rejoinder was a trumpet call to the nation. "On bended knees I asked for bread and received a stone. The English nation responds only to force, and I am not surprised by the Viceregal reply. The only public peace the Nation knows is the peace of the public prison. India is a vast prison house. I repudiate this (British) Law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the Nation for want of free vent."

Gandhi's plan was characteristic. The little community in the *Ashram* were to launch the campaign. Hitherto they had been kept in reserve in order that by a long course of discipline they might acquire stability. The restraint had been willingly accepted in the hope that some day they would be able to give a good account of themselves and of Satyagraha. "If," said Gandhi, "at the end of nearly fifteen years of its existence, the Ashram cannot give such a demonstration, it and I should disappear, and it would be well for the Nation, the Ashram and me." To his Working Committee colleagues he would say little but "Wait till I begin. Once I march to the place, the idea will be released. You will know what to do". The place was Dandi, on the sea-coast two hundred miles from the Ashram, and at 6.30 in the morning of March 12, Gandhi with seventy-nine followers turned his face to the sea, pledged not to return to the Ashram until the Salt Act was repealed, until Swaraj was won. Carrying a long stick in his hand, with a gentle smile playing on his face he strode at the head of his peaceful army along the road to Aslali, ten miles away, between densely packed crowds of people who had been standing for hours to watch him pass. At Jambusar, Jawaharlal came for last minute consultations. His father wanted to give their palatial family residence in Allahabad to the nation. They spent a few hours together and then Nehru watched him go with his party on the next stage in the journey to the salt sea. "I saw him," he wrote, "staff in hand, marching

along at the head of his followers, with firm step and a peaceful but undaunted look. It was a moving sight." Lord Irwin was of the opinion that the march would have little effect on Gandhi's followers beyond a brief enthusiasm and so decided to take no action for the time being.

After twenty-four days, they reached the sea at Dandi, on the coast below Surat. The night of April 5 was spent in fasting and prayer, and in the morning the pilgrims bathed in the sea. At 8.30 Gandhi bent down and picked up a lump of natural salt. The law was broken.

It was the signal for which the nation had been waiting. All over the country, in town and village, people began to manufacture and sell 'contraband' salt. There were large numbers of arrests and the President of the Assembly, V.J. Patel, resigned declaring that he could better serve the country by joining the movement. Jawaharlal was arrested in mid-April, and the Presidentship of the Congress passed to Gandhi. Gandhi himself was arrested on May 4 after midnight and was once more confined in Yeravda Jail. His arrest led to extensive hartals throughout the country and increased activity. Abbas Tyabji took charge when Gandhi was arrested, and when he too was imprisoned control passed to the poet, Mrs. Naidu, who was also arrested but subsequently released.

"God willing it is my intention to set out for Dharasana and reach there with my companions and demand possession of the Salt Works," Gandhi had written in a second letter to the Viceroy. His arrest prevented him from directing the operation personally, but the plan was nevertheless carried out. Two thousand five hundred non-violent volunteers raided Dharasana Salt Depot, under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu, and the journalist Webb Miller has left a graphic description of the scene. Mrs. Naidu led the volunteers in prayer, and then addressed them briefly: "Gandhi's body is in jail but his soul is with you. India's prestige is in your hands. You must not use any violence under any circumstances. You will be beaten but you must not resist; you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows." With Manilal Gandhi, Gandhi's second son, in the forefront, the throng moved forward towards the salt-pans, which were now surrounded with barbed wire and ditches filled with water, guarded by four hundred Surat police, with half a dozen British officials in command.



The police carried lathis—"five-foot-clubs tipped with steel". Twenty-five riflemen stood ready.

A hundred yards from the stockade the Gandhi men drew up and a picked column advanced, wading the ditches and approaching the barbed wire. Police officials ordered them to disperse. The column silently ignored the warning and slowly walked forward. "Suddenly," writes Miller, "at a word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers, and rained blows on their heads with the steel-shod lathis. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like nine-pins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow. Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors without breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down....."

So it went on. When the first column was gone another marched forward. "Although every one knew that within a few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear. They marched steadily with heads up, without the encouragement of music or cheering or any possibility that they might escape serious injury or death. The police rushed out and methodically and mechanically beat down the second column. There was no fight, no struggle: the marchers simply walked forward until struck down. There were no outcries, only groans after they fell. There were not enough stretcher-bearers to carry off the wounded. I saw eighteen injured being carried off simultaneously, while forty-two still lay bleeding on the ground awaiting stretcher-bearers. The blankets used as stretchers were sodden with blood."

After a while tactics were varied, and twenty-five men would advance and sit waiting. The police beat the sitting men with their lathis. "Finally the police became enraged by the non-resistance, sharing, I suppose, the helpless rage I had already felt at the demonstrators for not fighting back. They commenced savagely kicking the seated men in the abdomen and

testicles. The injured men writhed and squealed in agony, which seemed to inflame the fury of the police, and the crowd again almost broke away from their leaders. The police then began dragging the sitting men by the arms or feet, sometimes for a hundred yards, and throwing them into ditches. One was dragged to a ditch where I stood; the splash of his body doused me with muddy water. Another policeman dragged a Gandhi man to the ditch, threw him in, then belaboured him over the head with a lathi. Hour after hour stretcher-bearers carried back a stream of inert, bleeding bodies." Sarojini Naidu and Manilal Gandhi were arrested. V.J. Patel came, and sitting on the ground beneath a mango tree, dressed in the same coarse hand-spun smock that the crowd wore, said, surveying the scene: "All hope of reconciling India with the British Empire is lost for ever. I can understand any government taking people into custody and punishing them for breaches of the law, but I cannot understand how any government that calls itself civilized could deal as savagely and brutally with non-violent, unresisting men as the British have this morning."

By eleven in the morning, at a temperature of 116 in the shade, activities slackened. Miller, the only foreign correspondent, went to the temporary hospital. He counted 320 injured, many still insensible with fractured skulls, others writhing in agony from kicks in the testicles and stomach... Scores of the injured had received no treatment for hours and two had died. The Government of India made every effort to prevent Miller from communicating his reports to his newspaper in London, and only three hundred-word messages got through.

In Yeravda Jail Gandhi was translating from the Upanishads and other Sanskrit scriptures the beautiful hymns which Mr. John Hoyland has given to the English public in the volume of *Songs From Prison*. Sarojini Naidu had told the marchers at Dharasana that Gandhi was with them in spirit. Surely he was, as he sat in his cell, translating the lines of Kabir:

"He who is valiant of heart fleeth not from the face of peril,  
And he who fleeth from peril is craven and base:  
Behold, the battle is joined,  
Fierce, fierce is the onslaught:  
Anger, passion and pride,  
Ambition, lust and desire

Are the foes who ride wildly upon us  
 At our side fight our friends,  
 Self-rule, truth, piety, peace.  
 The warrior's sword is the Holy Name  
 And we brandish it wide:  
 In that war  
 Cravens are never seen,  
 But the valorous fight in the van."

The battle was fought not only at Dharasana but throughout India. Another Salt Depot at Wadala was besieged, and 400 volunteers were arrested, many more being injured in lathi charges. 15,000 volunteers took part. In Madras a crowd was fired on, and machine-guns were used in the Frontier Province to disperse a crowd in Peshawar. Even under machine-gun fire the volunteers preserved their disciplined and peaceful courage. Towards the end of the year there was a deeply significant incident in Barisal. Five hundred persons were injured in lathi charges in one day. Police were said to have set fire to property of Satyagrahis and their sympathisers and reports of indecent assault were received from many quarters. The village became infuriated, arrested the police, locked them in the local school and set fire to it. Two Congress volunteers broke the door open and rescued the police from the flames at the risk of their own lives. India had atoned for Chauri-Chaura.

George Slocombe, an English journalist who witnessed the raid on the Wadala Depot, obtained an early interview with Gandhi in jail. "The imprisoned Mahatma," he wrote "now incarnates the very soul of India." He begged that the Government should negotiate. The Government, with a hundred thousand political prisoners and hands red with the blood of thousands more of their peaceful opponents, would make no move, but the indefatigable Moderate leaders, Sapru and Jayakar, were permitted to interview Gandhi, who was induced to write a letter to the Nehrus, also in jail. Gandhi wrote that he doubted if the time was ripe for negotiations, but shortly afterwards the prisoners were brought together for consultations, on August 14, 1930. The Government would make no concession, negotiations failed at the outset.

An important feature of the Civil Disobedience programme

was a no-tax campaign. Vallabhbhai Patel once more led Bardoli. The opportunity for which they had waited so long had come at last. Repressive measures by the authorities became so intolerable that finally almost the whole population migrated from the British territory to the villages in the neighbouring Indian States of Baroda. Mr. H.N. Brailsford visited one of the places in which the 80,000 were encamped. They had built temporary shelters with matting for walls and palm leaves on sacking for roofs. "But they are crowded together with their beloved cattle, and packed in the narrow space are all their household goods, the great jars in which they store their rice, clothes and churns, chests and beds, shining pots of brass, here a plough, there a picture of the gods, and everywhere at intervals, the presiding genius of this camp, a photograph of Mahatma Gandhi. I asked a big group of them why they had left their homes. The women gave the promptest and simplest answer—"Because Mahatmaji is in prison." The men were still conscious of an economic grievance; 'Farming does not pay and the tax is unjust.' One or two said, "To win Swaraj or Self-Government." Brailsford reported terrorism by the Government: "One village was haunted every night by a gang of ruffians, who fired guns, tore veils, and on one occasion murdered an old peasant with an axe"—and many more tales of the same kind.

While all this was going on the First Round Table Conference met in St. James Palace, the King presiding, to deliberate on the future of India. The Conference could only advise the British Government. It might take what the British chose to offer in diplomatic language or it might take it from the steel-tipped lathi.

The Conference ended in January, although—as Mr. Malcolm MacDonald let out—the Prime Minister's concluding statement on the Government's policy, delivered on January 19, was drafted before Christmas. Members of the Simon Commission had taken no part in the Conference. Their Report had recommended important constitutional changes in the Provinces and in the Legislative Assemblies that would have resulted in a substantial increase of power for the Indian representatives, while leaving ultimate control in the hands of the British, who continued to direct defence and foreign affairs,

and to hold powers of veto on the decisions of the democratic assemblies. But says Professor Coupland, "The ultimate establishment of an all-India federation, including the States was relegated to the distant future; nor was any reference made to Dominion Status, though in 1929 the attainment of that status had been officially declared to be the 'natural issue' of the policy of 1917."

Mr. Winston Churchill, leading a powerful section of the Conservative Party, favoured the Simon Report, and bitterly denounced the 'painful difference' between the Viceroy and the Government of India on the one hand and the Statutory Commission on the other. There was a tense political battle over the recommendations of the First Round Table Conference, Mr. Churchill roundly saying that the Conservative Party could not be bound to them, and Mr. Baldwin pledging the Party to carry out the undertakings and trying to make the most of the 'safeguards' which remained undefined, and which would determine the measure of control to remain in British hands. Mr. MacDonald had pledged Britain the following vague terms:

"The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon the Legislatures, Central and Provincial, with such provision as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations, and to meet other special circumstances, and also with such guarantees as are required by the minorities to protect their political liberties and rights.

"In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be the primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new Constitution to full responsibility for her own Government."

A week after the end of the Conference in London, Gandhi and twenty-six other Congress leaders were unconditionally released. Three Moderate leaders who had been among the Delegates to the Conference—Sastri, Sapru and Jayakar—had cabled asking that no decision should be made by Congress ]

until they had had an opportunity for discussion with the Nationalist leaders.

For the present Gandhi contented himself with saying that he would judge the R.T.C. tree by its fruit. He had received a stupendous mass welcome in Bombay, but hurried on to Allahabad, where Motilal Nehru was dying. It was late at night when he arrived, but Motilal was lying awake, waiting for him, and Jawaharlal—who had been released at the same time—saw that Gandhi's presence and the few words he uttered had a soothing effect on his father.

One after another Indian leaders arrived, assembling for a crucial meeting of the Working Committee, and coming to pay homage to the dying man. He sat "like an old lion mortally wounded and with his physical strength almost gone, but still very leonine and kingly".

"I am going soon, Mahatmaji," he said to Gandhi, "and I shall not be here to see Swaraj. But I know that you have won it and will soon have it." On the morning of February 6, he died at Lucknow where he had been taken for treatment. The body was brought back to Allahabad, wrapped in the National flag and with another flag flying overhead. "There were some ceremonies at home," wrote Jawaharlal, "and then the last journey to the Ganga with a mighty concourse of people. As evening fell on the river bank on that winter day, the great flames leapt up and consumed that body which had meant so much to us who were close to him as to millions in India. Gandhiji said a few moving words to the multitude, and then all of us crept silently home. The stars were out and shining brightly when we returned, lonely and desolate."

The political situation gave Gandhi no respite for grief. Despite the official 'peace offer' from Britain "unprovoked assaults on innocent persons still continue," he declared; "respectable people are summarily and without apparent reason deprived of their movable and immovable property by mere executive action. A procession of women was forcibly dispersed. They were seized by the hair and kicked with boots. The continuance of such repression will make Congress co-operation impossible even if other difficulties were got over."

Sapru and Jayakar had nothing fresh to tell the Congress leaders, despite their cable, and Gandhi resolved to open con-

versations with Lord Irwin at once. He wrote asking for a heart to heart talk, and when an affirmative reply came he hurried off to Delhi in a third-class railway carriage. This was more than Mr. Churchill could tolerate. "It is alarming and also nauseating," he declared, "to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well-known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal palace, while he is still organising and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor."

Indeed, as Bernays noted in his diary, "Lord Irwin has taken great risks. He has decided to negotiate with rebels. Already there are murmurs of indignation behind him in London. The British Government is cautious and unhelpful. The last thing it wants is an election on India. If things go wrong there is no help there. His own Executive Council are loyal but dubious. He himself must know that if the negotiations break down the position will be infinitely worse than it would have been if they had never taken it in hand."

Of Lord Irwin's sincerity there was no doubt. But apart from the serious differences between New Delhi and the Cabinet, there were those in the Indian Civil Service who were engaged in a deep and tortuous game. One of them boasted to Bernays, "We know Gandhi won't co-operate. I do not like these conversations, but one step leads to another. If we appealed to Gandhi to come along and help, we had to let him out of prison; and if we let him out of prison, we had to let him consult with the Viceroy. It may all work out for the best. He will be manoeuvred into such a position where, if he breaks away, he will alienate all moderate sympathy and be left with nothing but a rump of irreconcilables."

"That," comments Bernays, "is a very typical Civil Service point of view. They are seldom sincere in any gesture of goodwill they make. They are determined to hold on to power to the last, and so far they have been remarkably successful."

Gandhi went to a large bungalow in Old Delhi, the house of Dr. Ansari. From its verandah there was a magnificent view of the turreted walls of the old city, and a few yards away was the palace of the Moghul emperors. Beyond the sprawling river Jumuna stretched the dusty plain. Five miles away, in the

Imperial capital at New Delhi, in the Viceroy's house at the end of a broad, stately avenue, was Lord Irwin.

Gandhi raised three main issues, which he regarded as a test of good faith. He wanted an enquiry into alleged police outrages; the abolition of the salt tax, and the legalisation of peaceful picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth merchants. He also discussed a general amnesty, repeal of special Ordinances, restitution of confiscated property, and reinstatement of officials. Conversations were frank and friendly.

At Dr. Ansari's in the evenings there were prayer meetings. Moslems, Hindus, Europeans, Sikhs, men of all creeds and all races met on the lawn in front of the verandah, and in the darkness, Gandhi, with the aid of a small lamp read a non-sectarian service. In the early mornings Gandhi would take long walks along the Ridge and sometimes Jawaharlal would accompany him. "We talked of many matters, of the past, of the present, and especially of the future. I remember how he surprised me with one of his ideas about the future of the Congress. I had imagined that the Congress, as such, would automatically cease to exist with the coming of freedom. He thought that Congress should continue, but on one condition: that it passed a self-denying ordinance, laying it down that none of its members could accept a paid job under the State, and if any one wanted such a post of authority in the State, he would have to leave Congress. I do not at present remember how he worked this out, but the whole idea underlying it was that the Congress by its detachment and having no axe to grind, could exercise tremendous moral pressure on the Executive as well as other departments of the Government, and thus keep them on the right track"—an idea which Jawaharlal found difficulty in appreciating.

But differ as they might, the two men were bound closely by friendship and mutual respect. No one has praised Gandhi more shrewdly than Nehru. "...He does represent the peasant masses of India; he is the quintessence of the conscious and sub-conscious will of those millions. It is perhaps something more than representation; for he is the idealized personification of those vast millions. Of course, he is not the average peasant. A man of the keenest intellect, of fine feeling and good taste, wide vision; very human, and yet essentially the ascetic who



has suppressed his passions and emotions, sublimated them and directed them in spiritual channels; a tremendous personality, drawing people to himself like a magnet, and calling out fierce loyalties and attachments—all this so utterly unlike and beyond a peasant. And yet withal he is the great peasant, with a peasant's outlook on affairs, and with a peasant's blindness to some aspects of life. But India is peasant India, and so he knows his India well and reacts to her lightest tremors, and gauges a situation accurately and almost instinctively, and has a knack of acting at the psychological moment."

The vitality of the man! The amazing energy and inner power "coming out of some inexhaustible spiritual reservoir". And how "he disciplined our lazy and demoralized people and made them work—not by force or any material inducement, but by a gentle look and a soft word and, above all, by personal example".

There came a crisis in the official conversations. Irwin, after consulting London, refused the police enquiry. The most he would do was to have any case of alleged repression investigated on the spot by the local authorities themselves. A breakdown seemed unavoidable, and on 22nd March when Gandhi left Dr. Ansari's house he intended to break off negotiations. The Working Committee expected him back in three-quarters of an hour. But at half-past three he was not back. The hours dragged on and at last, shortly after six, he returned.

Irwin had made a personal appeal to him. "Forget all about your theoretic right to demand a police enquiry; I admit that you have got the right to demand an enquiry. Of course you have. I appeal to you to forgo it. You must realise that nothing could result from a police enquiry but mutual recrimination. Cannot we let bygones be bygones? I appeal to you to come in on the side of peace." Gandhi replied at once, "If you make an appeal to me on those grounds, your Excellency, I have no other course but to respond to it".

The Secretary of the Home Department, Mr. H.W. Emerson, now took part in the discussion. Soon Gandhi secured a concession on the salt tax, as a result of which people living on the sea-coast were to be allowed to manufacture salt. It made little difference to the Government, but a big difference in principle. As Bernays observed, "Gandhi began his great

march to Dandi beach to defy the law by manufacturing salt, and the march has ended in his negotiating successfully the removal of the ban as man to man in the Viceroy's study."

But Gandhi felt an uneasy sense of something wrong. Finally he fastened on the question of the return of lands confiscated for non-payment of land revenue. Vallabhbhai Patel had promised the peasants of Gujarat that when peace was made their lands would be restored. Once more it seemed that negotiations must break down. The Viceroy refused to agree to Gandhi's demand about the restoration of land when it had passed to a third party, but he at last agreed to insert in the draft a statement indicating Gandhi's objections to the clause. At 2 a.m. in the morning Gandhi came back once more to Old Delhi. A formula on picketing had been agreed, earlier in the negotiations. Release of political prisoners was promised. The Viceroy would give Gandhi a note to the Bombay Government so that he might take up with them the question of the confiscated lands. Gandhi had agreed that the scope of future discussion at the resumed Round Table Conference should be "with the object of considering further the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference"—in other words the terms of reference would be the January statement by Mr. MacDonald.

The Working Committee was by no means satisfied. Vallabhbhai Patel objected to the formula on the question of confiscated lands. Jawaharlal Nehru deplored the acceptance on a basis of discussion short of complete independence. Nobody thought the undertaking to release prisoners was sufficiently comprehensive.

Gandhi interrogated member after member of the Committee—should he break on prisoners? on picketing? on lands? on what? Reluctantly the Committee accepted the settlement. But it was made clear from the outset that if the Conference failed to satisfy the Congress demand, or if the Government broke the terms of the truce, Civil Disobedience would be resumed. Lord Irwin had objected to Gandhi's statement that Civil Disobedience was only suspended. They had agreed to say 'discontinued' instead.

Gandhi went again to Lord Irwin and made it clear to him

that Congress would claim independence and would be represented at the Conference on that basis only.

Exactly a year had passed between the day when Reginald Reynolds had delivered Gandhi's letter and the day the Pact was signed in Delhi. Almost the first thing Gandhi did, on the evening of the same day, was to address a gathering of journalists, and they were impressed by a full statement, which took an hour and a half to deliver, and was given without the aid of a single note, and without the need to make a single correction. "For a settlement of this character," he said, "it is not possible nor wise to say which is the victorious party. If there is any victory, I should say it belongs to both." He went on to speak of the work that lay before Congress and the nation, appealing to the English to realise that "they must be prepared to let India feel the same glow of freedom which they themselves would die in order to possess". Nor was he speaking of a narrow nationalism. "I venture to suggest, in all humility, that if India reaches her destiny through truth and non-violence, she will have made no small contribution to the world peace for which all the nations of the earth are thirsting, and she would also have, in that case, made some slight return for the help that those nations have been freely giving to her."

There was another Press Conference next day, and Gandhi was submitted to a barrage of questions. One correspondent wanted to know if Gandhi would agree to become Prime Minister of the future Government of a free India. "No," he answered simply, "it will be reserved for younger minds and stouter hands." Perhaps his thoughts went to the conversation with Jawaharlal on the Ridge a few mornings before.

The journalist was wise in the ways of public men. Supposing the people wanted Gandhi and insisted? There was a roar of laughter as Gandhi smilingly answered, "I will seek shelter behind journalists like you".

A month later Lord Irwin left India, his period of office completed. Gandhi saw him at Bombay to say farewell. Lord Irwin, at least, had no regrets about the pact, and in May he said at a public luncheon in London, "I believe, from my knowledge of India, that if Mr. Gandhi comes to London, he will strain every nerve to secure an agreement, on these safeguards and other matters which will form the subject of discussion."

There was a special Congress session at Karachi in March to ratify the pact. Many had predicted that Gandhi would not be able to carry his followers with him, but apart from a scuffle with Communists in Bombay who tried to rush the platform because he had "betrayed the working-man", and one or two black flag demonstrations, there had been no serious opposition and the country had responded to the call for suspension of civil disobedience. The Karachi Congress ratified the pact. Jawaharlal Nehru was known to be discontented but made no open revolt, and Subhas Chandra Bose made little impression on the delegates. Before the Congress was over news came from Cawnpore, fifteen hundred miles away, of the most serious communal riot of all. Several hundred people, men, women and children, were killed or seriously injured. The Congress appointed a committee to report on the catastrophe.

News from England was ominous too. Official statements had been made implying that the safeguards were settled and inviolable. Bernays saw Gandhi in his tent at Karachi in the haze of an early morning. The Mahatma had snatched three hours' sleep, and now he sat on his bed working, with Miss Slade, his English helper, in attendance. Gandhi was worried. The Viceroy had assured him that the safeguards were entirely open to discussion. The Secretary of State and others were saying the opposite. "The question is vital. The British Government at any conference must be open, not merely to discussion on these questions, but to conviction."

From Karachi Gandhi dashed to Delhi and for four days he was again in Dr. Ansari's house, negotiating with the communal leaders in an attempt to avert further outbreaks.

In the middle of April Lord and Lady Willingdon arrived, the Viceroy straight and slim and very tall in a long old-fashioned grey frock coat, and his lady in a garden-party dress. He did not ask for Mr. Gandhi. The Lord Willingdon of 1915 had been most anxious that Gandhi should come to see him whenever there was any complaint. The Lord Willingdon of 1931 had learned the Whitehall brand of non-co-operation. London had sent a man who could be relied on to regain the ground his predecessor had so scandalously conceded.

Already the truce was strained. Many had expected that the pact would be followed immediately by the announcement

of the Second Round Table Conference, and that probably the early sessions, if not all, would be held in India. But as the weeks went by it became clear that India must go to London if she wished to be heard. In May Gandhi overcame the obstacle of the new Viceroy's coolness, and a meeting was arranged in Simla, marred by a refusal to allow cars to be at the station to meet the Indian leader—an order which was countermanded at the last moment for fear of a demonstration if Gandhi walked through the streets to the Viceroy's residence. Bernays reported that Lord Willingdon was "deliberately trying to end the personal negotiation policy so successfully worked by Irwin. He thinks that it is a great mistake to treat Gandhi differently from any other delegate. In logic, he is right. But, in practice I think it is a mistake."

The position deteriorated rapidly during the next three months, and finally Gandhi, the sole representative of Congress at the Conference, Mrs Naidu, and Pandit Malaviya cancelled their provisional plan to sail on 15th August. Gandhi sent a long letter to the Viceroy containing specific instances of violation of the truce terms by provincial governments. There had been many prosecutions for peaceful picketing, many failures to release political prisoners, fines had been enforced and punitive police maintained, confiscated property had often not been restored, or dismissed officials reinstated, peaceful meetings had been broken up, agriculturists had been coerced to extort dues they were unable to pay, the peaceful volunteers under Ghaffar Khan had been repressed, women had been maltreated.

The Government of India would give little or no satisfaction and after a long correspondence with Mr. Emerson, Gandhi wired on 13th August, that there was no way left open to him but to confirm his decision not to sail. "I can only add that I tried my utmost to go to London but failed. Please inform the Prime Minister accordingly." Besides all other reasons Gandhi was influenced by the refusal of the Government to nominate Dr. Ansari as a delegate. Ansari was a leading Congressman, and also represented many Moslems. Gandhi had obtained something like a promise from Irwin that he, as well as Mrs. Naidu and Malaviya, would be nominated, but Lord Willingdon would not agree. Anti-Congress Moslems

were evidently preferred, and to the Nationalists it seemed clear that the cards were being deliberately stacked against them.

Still he would "dash to London the moment the way is clear", and at the last minute talks were opened between the Viceroy and Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Sir Prabhaskar Pattani, Ghaffar Khan and Dr. Ansari.

The Government of India was evidently eager that Gandhi should go to London, and despite Lord Willingdon's earlier reluctance, he now followed his predecessor's example and negotiated a fresh pact with Gandhi. The Government undertook to secure the observance of the Delhi pact in those cases in which a breach was established, and agreed that an enquiry should be held into the charges of coercion in collection of revenue in Bardoli. Gandhi had felt compelled to accept less than justice for Bardoli at Delhi, in the interest of the nation. He made amends at Simla by insisting on this enquiry as an indispensable condition of his sailing for England.

The agreement was signed at 7 p.m. on 27th August and Gandhi left Delhi in a special train to reach Bombay in time to sail on s.s. *Rajputana* on the 29th. Most of the other delegates had sailed a fortnight earlier.

Jawaharlal came with him to Bombay, but as he sat in the train he knew that soon he would be alone, the sole representative of Congress. A sense of his own weakness swept over him, and the words he wrote for his paper *Young India*, which had been restarted after the truce, came straight from his heart, written with a desperate candour and sincerity:

"I must go to London feeling my weakness in its fullness. I must go to London with God as my only guide. He is a jealous Lord. He will allow no one to share His authority. One has therefore to appear before Him in all one's weakness, empty-handed and in a spirit of full surrender, and then He enables you to stand before a whole world and protects you from all harm. When I think of the prospects in London, when I know that all is not well in India, that the second settlement is bereft of all grace and is charged with no pleasant memories, there is nothing wanting to fill me with utter despair. The horizon is as black as it possibly could be. There is every chance of my returning empty-handed. That is just the state which realization of weakness finds one in. But believing as I do, that God

has made the way to London clear for me through the second settlement, I approach the visit with hope, and feel that any result that comes out of it would be good for the nation, if I do not prove faithless to the mandate given to me by the Congress."

From Delhi to Bombay people besieged the train, and at Bombay the crowd was so enormous that Gandhi had to alight at a wayside station and drive into the city, as he had done in the fateful days of April 1919 when he had been arrested and turned back on his way to the Punjab. On the Azad Maidan he addressed a tremendous meeting. He spoke of his mission to London, and the words he had written in the train were still burning in his soul. "Non-violence is a mighty power and that is the only power that will work effectively against tremendous odds there. I am going there with that trust but if I return, perchance, empty-handed, you should not be disappointed."

When he motored to the station the streets were crowded with cheering people, and the shouts of "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" resounded from packed roofs and balconies. So, garlanded with flowers, walking between volunteers clad in spotless white khaddar, Gandhi boarded the *Rajputana*, carrying with him the hopes of India and the certainty that in London the trap was set and waiting for him to enter.

Still he had his mission to perform. As he sat with his faithful secretary Mahadev Desai, looking through the piles of telegrams wishing him success, he came on one from a young Gujarati poet, and knew that there were some in India who understood.

"You have drunk many a bitter draught. Go forth now to finish the last cup of poison. You have pitted truth against falsehood, love against hate, straight dealing against deceit. You have refused to distrust even your bitterest enemy. Go forth then to quaff the bitterest draughts that may yet be in store for you. Let not the thought of our misery and our misfortunes make you pause. You have taught us to suffer cheerfully. You have stiffened our tender hearts into steel. What if you return empty-handed? Your very going is enough. Go and proclaim to mankind your message of love and brotherhood. Mankind ailing with ills untold is pining for the healing balm that, it knows, you will carry with you."

## CHAPTER VIII

### INDIA'S ENVOY—GANDHI IN EUROPE

GANDHI had insisted on booking the cheapest berths, in this case second class accommodation, for his small party. He was adamant about the luggage, of which he thought there was far too much. Seven suit-cases and cabin trunks were sent back from Aden. "If you can go about in Simla with a dhoti and a kurta and a pair of sandals, I assure you there is nothing to prevent you from doing so in England," he said firmly. "If I found that you were not properly clad, I should myself warn you and get you more woollens," and they could be given afterwards to the poor. Binoculars, presented by a friend, must also go back (if only as a gesture to remind him of Kallenbach) and this object too what was it? A camp-cot. "Oh, is that a camp-cot? I thought it was a hockey set. Well let the hockey set go. Have you ever seen me use it?"

Unlike the other Indians he suffered not at all from seasickness. He had chosen a corner on the second class deck where he spent most of the day and all the night, placidly following his familiar routine, retiring at half-past nine and rising at four, conducting his evening prayer meetings which were open to all whose stomachs permitted them to contemplate higher things.

At Aden the Resident refused to allow the Indians to fly the Indian National flag in welcoming Gandhi, but Gandhi sent a telephone message that he would not receive an address under such conditions, and the ban was withdrawn.

As the ship neared Suez there were cabled greetings from the Egyptian Nationalist leaders. At Suez and Port Saïd there were Indian deputations but none from the Egyptians; the authorities had refused to grant permission, and only a single representative of Nahas Pasha, with great difficulty, reached the Mahatma. Some Egyptian journalists were also able to interview him, and through them, he sent a message of love and non-violence to the Egyptian people. Nothing could show more clearly that the British regarded Gandhi as a dangerous



rebel, despite the truce. Gandhi was undisturbed. He played with all the children on the ship, and gaily shared with them his simple meals of fruit.

One evening, at the meeting, he spoke on prayer at the request of a Moslem youth. He recalled the days when he had been to Christian services in South Africa. "They supplicated God, but I could not do so. I failed egregiously. I started with disbelief in God and prayer, and until a late stage in life I did not feel anything like a void in life. But at this stage I felt that as food was indispensable for the body, so was prayer indispensable for the soul. Fasting is often necessary in order to keep the body in health, but there is no such thing as prayer-fasting. You cannot possibly have a surfeit of prayer. Three of the greatest teachers of the world—Buddha, Jesus, Mahammad—have left unimpeachable testimony that they found illumination through prayer and could not possibly live without it. But to come nearer home. Millions of Hindus and Moslems and Christians find their only solace in life in prayer. Will you vote them down as liars or self-deluded people? Well, then, I will say, that this lying has a charm for me, a truth-seeker, if it is 'lying' that has given me that mainstay or staff of life, without which I could not bear to live for a moment. In spite of despair staring me in the face on the political horizon I have never lost my peace. That peace, I tell you, comes from prayer. I am not a man of learning but I humbly claim to be a man of prayer. I am indifferent as to form. Every one is a law unto himself in that respect."

At Marseilles the sight of Gandhi in loin-cloth and shawl scandalized the French. Was he really going to walk about London like that? Gandhi answered with his disarming smile, "You, in your country, wear plus fours, I prefer minus fours". To the customs officer he declared, "I am a poor mendicant. My earthly possessions consist of six spinning-wheels, prison dishes, a can of goat's milk, six homespun loin cloths and towels, and my reputation which cannot be worth much."

He was welcomed to Europe by Romain Rolland's sister, Rolland being too ill to come. The great French writer had been one of the first to recognise Gandhi as a figure of world significance, and his study *Mahatma Gandhi*, published in the early twenties, remains the most illuminating sketch of Gandhi's

character. But the press men dispatched entirely misleading and untrue reports of the reception at Marseilles, and on the special train to Boulogne Gandhi examined the journalist chiefly responsible, and reduced him to confusion.

On September 12, Gandhi landed again in England. Three times he had come from South Africa in the years before the Great War, when he had been fighting the first Satyagraha campaign, but now he came from India as he had come once before, a shy young student. Then, too, he had been in white, agonisingly conspicuous and ill at ease. Now his white clothes were the home-spun threads of his own land, and his dress the simple garb of the Indian peasant.

From Folkestone he came by road to London. There was a reception at Friends House in the Luston Road, and then Muriel Lester shepherded him into a car and they drove through the pouring rain to Bow, to Muriel's beloved Kingsley Hall where he was to stay during his weeks in London.

It was fitting that Gandhi, the spokesman of the poverty-stricken millions of India, should be housed among the poor in the East End, but there had been tremendous competition for the honour, and Muriel Lester's triumph was at least a mixed blessing for the little community at Bow. For weeks they had been virtually besieged by journalists, film people, enterprising commercial gentlemen with attractive 'propositions' of all kinds.

Still it was right, not as a good publicity stunt but because it brought Gandhi among the English people, pierced the veil of illusion and misrepresentation in which the newspapers had sought to enshroud him. The moment of Gandhi's arrival in England was not when he stepped ashore, when he received the greetings at the enthusiastic reception, or when he first took his place in the Round Table Conference chamber. It was on that riotous Saturday night when a hundred East Enders were dancing and playing in Kingsley Hall and he walked in amongst them. For a few minutes he watched them, the English people, the rulers of India.

• He heard Muriel's voice, "Come and speak to our blind friend". He followed her across the room, the music died away. "As he talked to the blind woman," Muriel Lester wrote later, "the rest drew near; very gently, very quietly they approached;

mostly it was the young mothers and fathers who came closest to him; all unselfconscious they were, and as they pressed forward they held their babies out for him to touch. He greeted them all and took one child in his arms. There was a look of wonder and a feeling of deepest peace and utter satisfaction in the whole hall that night."

Long after, when he was back in India, in prison, one of the Bow workmen was prevailed on to speak about him at a public meeting. "A skinny little bloke with a funny face—that's how the papers had shown him to us. But he wasn't that sort of chap at all. The day he arrived I'm sure there were a thousand people at Kingsley Hall to meet him, and when we saw him for ourselves we found he was a fine chap, laughing and jolly, nothing out of the way at all. I took a lot of notice of him because I live just opposite. I watched all his ways. I reckon he was a man you must admire. He was so strong-minded."

On his second evening at Bow he was to broadcast to America. He made no preparations for his half hour talk. He sat on the flat roof, finishing his fruit supper, talking calmly to friends. The tumult downstairs was quieted. Kingsley Hall was on the air. Still Gandhi sat upstairs talking. Muriel Lester came in alone and began her introductory five minutes talk. Four and a half minutes had gone by when the door opened and Gandhi walked in. He took Muriel's chair and sat comfortably crosslegged as she concluded. She turned the microphone towards him, and he touched it rather gingerly.

"Do I talk into this thing?" he enquired. Those were the first words California heard. Then he shut his eyes and bent his head and for a moment sat silent.

He spoke for half an hour. The means adopted by the Indians in their fight for liberty, he said, had not been adopted by any other people of whom we have record. "...Not violence, not bloodshed, not diplomacy as one understands it nowadays but purely and simply truth and non-violence. No wonder that the attention of the world is directed towards this attempt to lead a successful, bloodless revolution."

He would wait for ages rather than seek to attain the freedom of his country through bloody means. "I feel in the innermost recesses of my heart, after a political experience extend-

ing over an unbroken period of close upon thirty-five years, that the world is sick unto death of blood-spilling. It is seeking a way out, and I flatter myself with the belief that perhaps it will be the privilege of the ancient land of India to show that way out to the hungry world."

There were, of course, endless callers, and endless visits to be paid, interviews to be given, meetings to be addressed. Talks with General Crozier, Randolph Churchill, Krishnamurti, Charlie Chaplin. Dashes to Canterbury, to Eton, to Lancashire, to Oxford. From rising at 4 a.m. to retiring often after midnight; there was an incessant round of urgent duties, apart from the Conference sessions and the office work at Knightsbridge.

Inevitably certain things had to be sacrificed. He could not go to the Old Vic, he missed a visit to Jordans Meeting House, the plan to go to South Wales was scrapped, tentative arrangements to meet Dick Sheppard never materialized.

At the meetings, says Muriel Lester: "He would begin to talk in his low, quiet voice, deliberate, objective and exact in every statement, as befits the worshipper of truth, with no shred of passion, piety or sentiment; during the whole two hours no oratory, no use of voice inflections, no movement, no gesture, none of the usual concomitants of enthusiasm and persuasiveness."

On Armistice Day the car in which Muriel was taking him to see Lady Astor got as far as Trafalgar Square in time for the silence. When it was over she turned to him: "There! You've been at the very heart of the people now. I hope you found the real thing?" He mused for a moment. "I've been in the silence before in India," he observed. Muriel decided he must be thinking of Armistice Day celebrations in Bombay, and was concerned to point out the difference.

Lady Astor, with some assistance from her spiritual adviser, assured Gandhi that he was a humbug, and that while the English create, he could only destroy. She said it all with a smile, and a great deal more to the same effect. He listened patiently and then asked her to hear him without interruption.

"I want you to understand the facts; only then can you form opinions. At present you do not know the facts. You say we can only destroy; we do not create. I will tell you what we have set up in India during this last fourteen years."

"Out of it all came the story he loves to tell; the village work, the revival of peasant industries, the setting up of home industries that provide subsidiary employment during the lean months of an agricultural labourer's year, the organising of gangs of villagers in co-operative effort for the improvement of sanitary conditions, the loan clubs that have rescued thousands of victims from the money-lenders' hands, the temperance propaganda, finally the awakening of women and their emergence from purdah with a new passion for righteousness."

Not all his hearers were so unrecceptive. Against advice he insisted on the visit to Lancashire, and spent two days there. He wanted to meet the Lancashire men who had suffered from the boycott of Lancashire cotton goods and tell them, "I do not want my country's happiness at the sacrifice of any other country's happiness... I am pained at unemployment here. But there is no starvation or semi-starvation. In India we have both... You have three million unemployed, but we have nearly three hundred million unemployed for half the year. Your average unemployment dole is 70 shillings. Our average income is seven shillings and sixpence a month."

"We were prepared for courtesy," he said afterwards. "We were even prepared for a little bitterness which distress and misunderstanding often create; but we found instead a warmth of affection for which we were not prepared. I shall treasure the memory of these days to the end of my earthly existence." Among the Lancashire workers, as among the slum-dwellers of Bow, Gandhi was liked if not always fully understood. Well might he say that his true work in England lay outside the Conference.

"Does not the Round Table Conference try your patience?" Bernard Shaw asked, and Gandhi answered, "It requires more than the patience of a Job. The whole thing is a huge camouflage and the harangues that we are treated to are meant only to mark time."

Gandhi made his position clear early in the Conference; he stood for a self-governing India, with control over defence, finance and foreign relations. When the representative character of the Congress was challenged by other delegates he offered to abide by a referendum. He in turn protested against the unrepresentative British India delegation, and in reply to

Brailsford's sympathetic "Are not the Indian Princes the worst obstacle in your path?" he said simply, "The Princes are British Officers in Indian dress".

But the Conference would not deal in fundamental principles. The communal tangle was made the centre of the constitutional discussion. Gandhi appealed to a meeting of Labour M.P.s in the House of Commons to disabuse their minds "of the notion that the masses of India are enamoured of pax Britannica. The truth is that they are anxious to throw off the British yoke simply because they do not want to starve". To another All-Party meeting in the House he declared that "Under the present safeguards 80 per cent of the revenue is to be farmed out to the foreigner, and only 20 per cent to be left to us from which we are to run the departments of education, sanitation, etc. I would not touch that Independence. I would far rather remain in compulsory subjection and declare myself a rebel . . ."

He met most of the members of the new National Government, but Mr. Winston Churchill would not see him. He went to Buckingham Palace, still in his loin cloth and shawl, and when, after he had talked to the King for a few minutes, someone referred to his scanty dress, he replied with an amused twinkle in his eyes, "The King had enough on for both of us".

As the Conference neared its end, he rose from his place on Lord Sankey's left and spoke. "While there is yet a little sand left in the glass," he said, "I want you to understand what this Congress stands for... You will find me always having the greatest spirit of compromise, if I can but fire you with the spirit that is working in the Congress, namely, that India must have real liberty. Call it by any name you like: a rose will smell as sweet by any other name, but it must be the rose of liberty that I want, and not the artificial product." He spoke of the communal problem and how it might be solved if the wedge of foreign rule were withdrawn. He appealed to the Princes to accept some code of fundamental rights to apply to all India. Then he spoke of England and to England, without emphasis or rhetoric, but from his heart.

"This is, perhaps, the last time that I shall be sitting with you at negotiations. It is not that I want that. I want to sit

at the same table with you and to negotiate and plead with you and to go down on bended knee before I take the final leap and final plunge. But whether I have the good fortune to continue to tender my co-operation or not does not depend upon me. It largely depends upon you. But it may not even depend on you. It depends upon so many circumstances over which neither you nor we may have any control whatsoever. Then let me perform this pleasant task of giving my thanks to all, from Their Majesties down to the poorest men in the East End, where I have taken up my habitation.

"In that settlement which represents the poor people of the East End of London, I have become one of them. They have accepted me as a member, and as a favoured member of their family. It will be one of the richest treasures that I shall carry with me. Here, too, I have found nothing but courtesy and nothing but a genuine affection from all with whom I have come in touch. I have come in touch with so many Englishmen. It has been a priceless privilege to me. They have listened to what must have often appeared to them to be unpleasant although it was true. Although I have often been obliged to say these things to them they have never shown the slightest impatience or irritation. It is impossible for me to forget these things. No matter what befalls me, no matter what the fortunes may be of this Round Table Conference, one thing I shall certainly carry with me—that is, that from the high to low I have found nothing but the utmost courtesy and the utmost affection. I consider it was well worth my paying this visit to England in order to find this human affection. It has enhanced, it has deepened my irrepressible faith in human nature, that although Englishmen and Englishwomen have been fed upon the lies that I so often see disfiguring your Press, that although in Lancashire the Lancashire people had perhaps some reason for becoming irritated against me, I found no irritation and no resentment even in the operatives. The operatives, men and women, hugged me. They treated me as one of their own. I shall never forget that.

"I am carrying with me thousands upon thousands of English friendships. I do not know them, but I read that affection in their eyes, as early in the morning I walk through your streets. All this hospitality, all this kindness will never be effaced from

my memory no matter what befalls my unhappy land. I thank you for your forbearance."

But there was no readiness to part with power. The Conference had failed, and now he prepared to leave. "To convince England," pleaded an Indian lady, thinking of his work outside the Conference, "do you not think you should stay here a little longer?"

"No," Gandhi answered, "I cannot stay beyond my time. I would cease to have any influence here if I overstayed and the people would cease to respond. The influence that I now exercise is only a temporary influence, not permanent. My place is in India, in the midst of my countrymen, who may be called upon to start another campaign of suffering. In fact, the English people seem to respond today because they know that I represent a suffering people, and when I am suffering with my own countrymen I would be speaking to them from India as heart speaks to heart."

On 5th December he left London for Folkestone. As they got into the train at Victoria, Gandhi turned anxiously to Muriel Lester. "Are the toys all right?" He was thinking of the little woolly animals, coloured candles and chalk drawings the nursery school children in Bew had given him on his birthday. "They're the only things I'm taking back to India," he said, "except what I came with." He went to the window of his third-class carriage to smile once more at the large crowd singing 'Auld Lang Syne' as the train moved out.

He was to meet his ship at Brindisi, in a fortnight. Meanwhile there were meetings in Paris, a visit to Romain Rolland at Villeneuve in Switzerland, a glance at the beauties of Rome.

In Villeneuve Gandhi and Rolland met for the first and only time. Miraben (Miss Slade, the English Admiral's daughter) who had been first a disciple of Rolland and then of Gandhi, was there too for she was one of the small party from India. Desai wrote that it was literally a case of thought leaping out to wed with thought. Overflowing love broke the barrier of language and made speech unnecessary.

In Switzerland too Gandhi first met Pierre Ceresole, the pioneer of International Voluntary Service for Peace, although that modest young man had thought it wrong to present himself when there were so many visitors.



On one of Gandhi's invariable early morning walks there was a long conversation. "I wish Muriel," said Gandhi—Muriel Lester was with them—"would lead a movement of men and women who would refuse to take the dole. They would volunteer to work, but would refuse charity. It's bad for the rich to be able to soothe their consciences by securing to the unemployed a few shillings a week . . . Their Non-Violence would have a tremendous effect. . . ."

"But, Mr. Gandhi," Pierre said very gravely, "I'm afraid our people in Europe are not like yours in India. I'm afraid they're not ready for such acts as these."

There was a pause, and then in a low and infinitely gentle voice Gandhi said: "Are you sure it's the people who are not ready, M. Ceresole?"

"Oh," exclaimed Pierre, "I see what you mean. You're right. It's we who are failing. It's leadership we lack. Is that what you mean?"

"I must confess, Mr. Ceresole," he answered in the same tone as before, "I do not seem to have come across leaders in Europe—not of the sort that the times call for."

In Rome, Gandhi, Miraben and Mahadev went to see Mussolini. Visitors to the Duce were usually obliged to undergo the minor ordeal of walking the full length of a tremendous hall to where the great man sat in stately eminence at a table. But on this occasion Signor Mussolini left his dignified seat and came down the hall to meet them, and after half an hour's conversation he actually accompanied them as far as the door. After all, this little brown man was apparently going to cause the British some more trouble.

The Pope would not receive him. Perhaps Gandhi remembered the day in South Africa when Charlie Andrews had been preaching in a Christian Church and Willie Pearson had brought him to hear the sermon. The church-wardens had refused him admission because he was a coloured man and an Asiatic. But now at least he could enter the Sistine Chapel and gaze upon the statue of Jesus on the Cross. He stood before it for several minutes and then turned away murmuring to Desai, "One can't help being moved to tears."

The time had come for him to leave Europe. One of his last visitors was the younger daughter of the King, Princess

Maria. She had brought him a basket of fruit. "They are Indian figs; I've brought them for your journey to Brindisi tonight."

Gandhi was delighted, but he could not dissemble even for a princess. "They are not figs," he said mildly, when he had thanked her. "Oh yes, Fichi d'India," she assured him. "What we call figs," the Mahatma answered, "are not like this. But whether they are figs or not, they will taste just as sweet on the journey, whatever their name. Thank you."

As he was about to step aboard the *Pilsna* at Brindisi he was offered a drink of milk from a cup of the fifth century before the Christian era.

"Is the milk goat's milk?"

"It is goat's milk," several voices replied eagerly.

He smiled at them. What was it the Gujarati poet had sung? "Go forth now to finish the last cup of poison." There had been poison in that ancient European cup, a grain of poison souring the milk of kindness. A little time before this cup was made Socrates had drunk poison—and won a great victory for truth and voluntary sacrifice. Gandhi raised the cup drank deep, and was gone

## CHAPTER IX

### **INDIA STRUGGLES—THE SECOND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE CAMPAIGN AND THE BID FOR SOCIAL REFORMS**

IN his talk with Lord Willingdon in August, Gandhi had obtained the promise of an enquiry into the Bardoli grievances, and had also expressed concern at the distress among peasants in the United Provinces. After his departure for London the position in both areas deteriorated rapidly and tension also increased in Bengal and the Frontier Province.

The Bardoli enquiry soon collapsed. The Government refused to produce for inspection Government documents relating to the issues involved and Patel and his associate withdrew in protest. The crisis in the United Provinces was in the capable hands of Nehru. He was straining every nerve to avoid an open struggle before Gandhi returned, although it had been made clear at the time of the Willingdon negotiations that Congress retained the right to take defensive direct action in such circumstances.

Bengal was seething with indignation and two events stood out. Two detainees had been killed and twenty injured in firing in a detention camp at Hijli. A local enquiry whitewashed the prison officials, but facts began to leak out and a Government enquiry reported that the officials were to blame for the tragedy. More serious was the allegation that during slight disturbances in Chittagong "certain non-official Europeans and hooligans broke at night into the premises of a printing press and with huge hammers and iron rods broke the machinery and belaboured the manager and others". It was said also that there had been deliberate efforts to provoke communal strife.

Finally there was trouble in the Frontier Province. Under the leadership of a brave and resolute Pathan, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a formidable volunteer organisation, the Khudai Khidmatgars, or Servants of God, had been formed (called, on account of their uniform rather than their politics, 'Red Shirts'). Khan, a deeply religious man of simple character, had been impressed by Gandhi's teaching and his Servants of God were vowed

to non-violence. Gandhi had tried several times since the Delhi Pact to get permission to go to the Province to visit Ghaffar Khan, who was now known as 'the Frontier Gandhi', but he had not been allowed to enter, and his son Devadas Gandhi had gone instead. Devadas Gandhi's report led the Working Committee to accept the Red Shirts as an official Congress volunteer organisation. Now, as 1931 expired, Ghaffar Khan was bidden to attend an official Durbar held by the Chief Commissioner. When he refused he and his brother Dr. Khansaheb were arrested and thrown into prison.

Simultaneously the crisis came in Bengal and the United Provinces. Bengal undertook a boycott of British goods. In United Provinces the Government declared, as they had in Bardoli in 1928, that objections would be considered only after the payments had been made. The Provincial Congress thereupon advised the peasantry to withhold payment of rent and revenue temporarily, pending negotiations. As soon as relief was given the advice would be altered, and — a last attempt to avert the inevitable—they would immediately withdraw the advice if the Government would suspend collection while negotiations were going on.

Nehru passed through Bombay in Christmas week, left his sick wife there, and hastened back to Allahabad for a conference on the U.P. crisis. He found a peremptory Government order that the conference would be prohibited if it was to consider the agrarian question. Nehru and his friends were inclined to disregard this injunction but they did not want to make the situation impossible for Gandhi, who was due to land at Bombay within a week, and the Conference was postponed. The Government then served Nehru and a Moslem colleague, Sherwani, with orders not to leave Allahabad. Assuming that the order was intended to prohibit work among the villages in the Province, Nehru and Sherwani left for Bombay to meet Gandhi. They were arrested and a few days later Nehru was given the savage sentence of two years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine, while Sherwani for the same offence received six months and a fine. After hearing the sentence the Moslem turned to the magistrate and asked blandly, "Is the smaller sentence due to communal considerations?"

Gandhi himself was the victim of a deception which might or

might not be only a coincidence. An alleged interview, cabled from Rome, credited him with an arrogant statement that the struggle would be resumed at once. Gandhi on board the *Pilsna* cabled a categorical denial—he had given no press interview in Rome at all. Several British newspapers and public men refused to accept the explanation and contemptuously called Gandhi a liar.

He landed at Bombay on December 28, 1931, and in the evening addressed the largest meeting of his life at the Azad Maidan, where he had spoken on the eve of his departure for London. "I take it," he said, "that these are all Christmas gifts from Lord Willingdon, our Christian Viceroy . . . . I repeat again, I had hoped it would be possible to find a way to co-operate with the Government. I will even now do my best to find the way out."

During the next four days the situation went from bad to worse. Lord Willingdon had promulgated thirteen special Ordinances, which were described by Sir Samuel Hoare in March as "very drastic and severe. They cover almost every activity of Indian life". Winston Churchill with characteristic bluntness said they were "more drastic than any that were required since the Mutiny". Thousands of arrests were made all over the country. Gandhi wired to the Viceroy asking for an interview to discuss the situation. Lord Willingdon refused to grant one.

The Working Committee met and passed a number of resolutions; they called upon the nation to resume civil disobedience and appealed to the free people of the world to watch the struggle in the belief that "the non-violent method adopted by the Congress gives it a world-wide importance and if the method becomes demonstrably successful it is likely to furnish an effective moral equivalent to war. . . ."

Gandhi remained calm. One of his last acts before he was arrested in the small hours of the morning on January 4 was to dispatch gifts to the two English detectives who had been detailed to guard him in Europe. When his son Devadas woke him with the news that the escort had arrived to arrest him it was his day of silence. He passed a note to Dr. Verrier Elwin, an English friend, in which he wrote: "I would like you yourself to tell your countrymen that I love them even as I love my own countrymen. I have never done anything towards them in hatred or malice,

and God willing, I shall never do anything in that manner in future." He left a message for India too : "Infinite is God's mercy. Never swerve from truth and non-violence, never turn your back, and sacrifice your lives and all to win Swaraj."

He was arrested under a Regulation of 1827 under which any person could be detained indefinitely without any reason being assigned. The same policy had been followed when he was arrested at Dandi. No charge was brought, no conviction was registered, no sentence was pronounced. The Government had no intention of repeating the experience of 1922 when the accused had somehow become the accuser, and his proud acceptance of 'guilt' had vindicated his innocence. But they could not escape the consequences of their repressive policy so easily. The Bishop of Madras declared: "Although it deeply grieves me to say it, I see in Mr. Gandhi the patient sufferer for the cause of righteousness and mercy, a truer representative of the crucified Saviour than the men who have thrown him into prison yet call themselves by the name of Christ."

The Government, having seized the initiative, kept it. Under the Ordinances every Congress organisation and even allied organisations such as national schools were banned, and Congressmen of any importance were summarily arrested, whether or not they had committed any offence. Lathi charges were frequent and violent. Buildings, property, automobiles, bank accounts were seized, public gatherings and processions were forbidden, newspapers and printing presses were rigorously controlled. Still, Nehru declares: "There can be little doubt that the resistance offered to the British Government in 1932 was far greater than in 1930."

Gandhi had done everything he could to avert the catastrophe. Even after his arrest he wrote imploringly from jail begging Lord Willingdon to see him but the Viceroy disdained even to reply.

In Yeravda Jail once more, Gandhi's mind was occupied with the critical question of the depressed classes, the millions of lowly manual workers whose tasks of sweeping, scavenging and tanning were held to contaminate them and make them 'untouchables'. Gandhi had himself repudiated the superstition as a small boy when he could see no wrong in touching Uka, the sweeper who served the Gandhi family, and he had risked the very existence of Satyagraha Ashram by admitting an untouchable family and

preparing to move to the Untouchables' quarter and earn his living there if the Ashram were forced to close down. For many years now he had taught that the attitude of the orthodox Hindus to the depressed classes was a hideous blot on the religion, and a perversion of the true conception of caste which, he said, classified differences of function and did not establish a hierarchy.

He had stressed the point at the Round Table Conference. "Let this Committee and let the whole world know that today there is a body of Hindu reformers who feel that this is a shame, not of the 'untouchables' but of orthodox Hinduism, and they are, therefore, pledged to remove this blot of untouchability. We do not want on our rolls and on our census 'untouchables' classified as a separate class. Sikhs may remain as such in perpetuity, so may Moslems, so may Europeans. Would 'untouchables' remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived."

In March he wrote from Yeravda to Sir Samuel Hoare reminding him that in the Conference Gardhi had said he would resist with his life the grant of separate electorates to the depressed classes. He believed that the Government's decision was soon to be announced. He had thought at first that he would await the announcement and then take appropriate action. But sitting at his spinning wheel in his prison cell he had been moved to make appeal to the British Government and to tell them respectfully that "in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the depressed classes, I must fast unto death". Sir Samuel Hoare answered that the decision would be taken entirely on the merits of the case.

But when the announcement came it included a separate electorate for the depressed classes, and in August Gardhi wrote to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, "I have to resist your decision with my life". The fast was to begin on 20th September. The Prime Minister expressed surprise that Gurdhi should "propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death . . . solely to prevent the depressed classes . . . from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing . . . ."

As the fast began, the Bombay Government released a statement from Gurdhi. "The impending fast is against those who have faith in me, whether Indian or foreigner, and for those who

have it not. Therefore, it is not against the English official world, but it is against those Englishmen and women, who in spite of the contrary teaching of the official world, believe in me and the justice of the cause I represent. Nor is it against those of my countrymen who have no faith in me, whether they be Hindus or others, but it is against those countless Indians (no matter to what persuasion they belong) who believe that I represent a just cause. Above all, it is intended to sting Hindu conscience into right religious action."

On the evening of the first day the Press were allowed to see him. He showed the problem to the journalists in a new light. "I believe that if untouchability is really rooted out, it will not only purge Hinduism of a terrible blot but its repercussion will be world-wide. My fight against untouchability is a fight against the impure in humanity . . . It is an issue of transcendental value, far surpassing Swaraj in terms of political constitutions."

A Conference met at once at Bombay and then in Poona. On the third day of the fast Gandhi's condition began to cause anxiety. His nine months' imprisonment had again told on his health. The Yeravda Pact was signed on the following day, but the British Government's acceptance was still necessary before Gandhi could break his fast. On September 26 the doctors declared him to be in the danger zone, and at last news came that the formula had been accepted. Rabindranath Tagore was among the few who were allowed to see Gandhi on that day.

In reply to criticisms that the fast had exercised coercion he answered simply, "Love compels, it does not coerce." In one of his subsequent statements in answer to a correspondent who pressed this charge he wrote: "It would be a matter of great grief to me if the public men whom the correspondent mentions really suppressed their own opinions and accepted proposals which, but for the threat of my death, they would never have endorsed. If they acted as the correspondent suggests, they rendered a great disservice to the country and failed to appreciate the purely religious character of the fast. In public life one has often to perform the painful duty of sacrificing friends for the sake of truth or public weal."

On September 29, three days after the fast had ended, the Government cut off all privileges regarding visitors. Gandhi was once more a prisoner, but since he was a detainee and not a



convicted criminal he demanded the restoration of these privileges in order that he might carry on his work for the relief of the depressed classes which had only been begun by the fast. After a lengthy correspondence the privileges were restored in November.

Gandhi now issued a series of remarkable public statements on the vexed question of untouchability, which have been collected and published under the title *My Soul's Agony*. In the first statement he made it clear that the political provisions of the Yeravda Pact must be translated into a genuine determination to abolish untouchability altogether. "The major part of the resolutions of the Yeravda Pact has to be fulfilled by these millions, the so-called Caste Hindus, who have flocked to the meetings I have described." (Mass meetings all over India which Gandhi had addressed in the years before his imprisonment, many of which had pledged themselves to the removal of untouchability). "It is they who have to embrace the suppressed brethren and sisters as their own, whom they have to invite to their temples, to their homes, to their schools. The 'untouchables' in the villages should be made to feel that their shackles have been broken, that they are in no way inferior to their fellow villagers, that they are worshippers of the same God as other villagers and are entitled to the same rights and privileges that the latter enjoy. But if these vital conditions of the Pact are not carried out by Caste Hindus, could I possibly live to face God and man?" For he saw that he might have to fast again on this issue. "The Fast, if it has to come, will not be for the coercion of those who are opponents of the reform, but it will be intended to stir into action those who have been my comrades or who have taken pledges for the removal of untouchability."

Gandhi's term for the 'untouchables' was 'Harijans'—pure men of God, a name suggested by friends among the depressed classes who thus interpreted a hymn composed by a saintly Gujarati poet. "I immediately seized upon the word," Gandhi wrote, "as also otherwise most fitting, for the most despised people are the most favoured of God." He gave the name *Harijan* to his new weekly paper, begun in 1932 in place of the older *Young India*.

In December Gandhi joined in a fast undergone by another prisoner, S.P. Patwardhan. Patwardhan, a caste Hindu who

shared Gandhi's views on 'untouchability', applied for scavenger's work in the jail as a gesture of unity with the depressed classes. But the jail rules upheld the prejudices of orthodox Hinduism, and there was a bar against giving scavenging work to caste Hindus. Within two days the fast was terminated by a promise of favourable consideration of the request, and within a week the Secretary of State made the necessary amendments.

More serious was the Government's effective support for the orthodox prejudice against the entry of the Harijans into the Hindu Temples. Gandhi had persuaded Mr. Kelappan to postpone a proposed fast to death over the right of temple entry at Guruvayur temple in the South, and had promised to join him in a later fast if a satisfactory solution could not be found. The orthodox refusal to admit the untouchables was complex. They held in the first place that the presence of untouchables actually polluted the temple and thereby drove out the spirit of the God, which would only return after rites of purification; the uncleanness of the scavengers was held to consist not in their occupation so much as in their habits, as meat-eaters which offended the gods. Gandhi's attitude on this point was that the whole position was a disastrous misinterpretation of Hinduism, and that a non-rational religious intuition could only be accepted if it did not infringe the basic morality arising from recognition of the brotherhood of all men. Nevertheless he would not force his views on unwilling and sincere Hindus, and the whole point of concentrating on Guruvayur was that the depressed classes were very numerous in the district and that a large majority of the orthodox was believed to favour their admission to the temples. To test this contention a plebiscite was carried out, of which Gandhi reports: "The total population entitled to temple entry being approximately 65,000, the outside estimate of adults may be taken as 30,000. As a matter of fact 27,465 adult men and women were actually visited for receiving their votes. Of these 65 per cent were in favour of temple-entry, 9 per cent voted against, 8 per cent were neutral, and 27 per cent abstained."

This by no means silenced the critics. They contended that of the population entitled to temple entry, only a small proportion was sufficiently devout to care for the privilege, just as only a small proportion of a nominally Christian population in Britain

goes to Church or cares about Church organisation. The views of the devout minority could not be ignored simply because they were a minority—a view which was bound to appeal to Gandhi. Ultimately he suggested a compromise, on the understanding that the objecting Hindus were probably a minority of those who actually used the temple. They might, he suggested, use the temple at different times by agreement, and the priest could perform a rite of purification for their benefit if it was desired. At this point the *Zamorin* of the temple and his followers took refuge in the law. The temple, they claimed, was a private temple and not therefore bound to respect the general opinion of the public. The authorities had as much right to exclude any persons whose entry they did not desire as the owners of an English chapel. Gandhi replied by citing the judgment of the Madras High Court that “the Guruvayur temple is not a private temple but a public temple and every Hindu has a right to worship in it, subject to such customary rules and regulations which have been prevailing from time immemorial”.

Still the *Zamorin* took refuge in the terms of the trust, under which he professed himself unable to amend the custom to meet the prevailing public opinion. The reformers now endeavoured to secure that such public temples as Guruvayur should become amenable to public opinion by introducing legislation into the Madras Legislative Council. At this point, in January 1933, the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, stepped in and vetoed the Bills on the ground that “the question could not properly be dealt with on a provincial basis”. He would however permit the introduction of a Bill into the Central Legislative Assembly “which seeks the abolition of untouchability”.

This Government intervention changed the problem entirely. Gandhi's whole position rested on the possibility of commencing the reform where orthodox opinion was enlightened, and he had doubtless hoped that the example of the opening of the celebrated temple of Guruvayur would encourage a wave of reform throughout the country, in the towns and villages where opinion was most advanced. Once the process had really begun each province might well march at its own speed. The victory to the Vaikom Road in 1924 which had resulted in the opening of roads to the untouchables all over the State of Travancore was an example of what might be anticipated. The Viceroy's edict

that reform might not take place in one province until all the provinces acted simultaneously postponed the reform indefinitely.

Many suspected that the Government's main motive was to defeat Gandhi and limit his over-growing influence with the Indian masses, but it is more probable that the conservative desire to avoid trouble among the orthodox Hindus prompted this bias in favour of the status quo. Even so, the Viceroy's decision was a plain example of what Nationalist Indians regard as the reactionary character of British rule, even when the issue was not one directly affecting British interests.

During the fast which ended with the Yeravda Pact, at least two Hindu temples had been thrown open to the untouchables, and this was followed in November by an announcement from the Maharaja of Kashmir that all his State temples would be thrown open to the depressed classes. Thus in a province of more than 84,000 square miles with a population of over three millions the reform was accomplished at a single stroke, and there seems to be no report of any disturbances in connection with it. What 'responsible Government' would not permit in Madras, autocratic rule had achieved in Kashmir. The Maharaja, unlike the Viceroy, did not believe that the question could not properly be dealt with on a provincial basis. The Maharaja of Travancore followed the example of Kashmir in November 1936.

Gandhi was not only in conflict with the Government of India and with a formidable section of the orthodox Hindus, he was also opposed by Dr. Ambedkar, who claimed to be the acknowledged leader of the depressed classes. Ambedkar and others had fought for separate electorates for the untouchables, and now he claimed that caste should be abolished altogether, a course which Gandhi would not contemplate, since he believed the institution to have great value, not in the form of a hierarchy, but as an analysis of the main vocations in society, and an attempt to conserve ability and continuity of tradition in each.

Ambedkar's revolt against caste ultimately became a revolt against Hinduism and in September 1936 it was reported that within the space of a few weeks two and a half million untouchables had adopted Christianity at his instigation, a conversion which may have brought some improvement to the lot of

these unfortunate people, but was scarcely likely to impress Indian opinion with the value of Christian missionary endeavour.

The blow to the crusade for Harijan reform which the Government had, perhaps unwittingly, struck, had a very real, if intangible, effect on the drive to unify the Hindu community, and the deepest levels of Gandhi's consciousness was troubled. Even at the time of the Yeravda Pact he had sensed deficiencies in the response of the Hindu community and had forecast the possibility of a fresh fast which might commence in six months from October 1932. But March had come and gone and still he had no clear vision.

In May there occurred a spiritual experience unique in his long life. He had rejected the title of Mahatma, he had often said that none today were worthy to be compared with the saints of old, he was "but a humble seeker after truth" who had never seen his God face to face. Now, and never again, he was to experience an illumination strikingly similar to those of which many saints have spoken. Of the decision which it determined the whole world knew next day, but of the experience itself we know only from what Gandhi himself wrote in the *Harijan* five and a half years later.

"I had gone to sleep the night before without the slightest idea of having to declare a fast the next morning. At about twelve o'clock in the night something wakes me up suddenly, and some voice—within or without, I cannot say—whispers, 'Thou must go on a fast'. 'How many days?' I ask. The voice again says, 'Twenty-one days'. 'When does it begin?' I ask. It says, 'You begin tomorrow'. I went quietly off to sleep after making the decision. I did not tell anything to my companions until after the morning prayer. I placed into their hands a slip of paper announcing my decision and asking them not to argue with me, as the decision was irrevocable. Well, the doctors thought I would not survive the fast, but something within me said that I would and that I must go forward. That kind of experience has never in my life happened before or after that date."

The fast began on May 8, and in view of its possible outcome Gandhi was released from Yeravda Jail on the same day. He made a long public statement in the course of which he expressed the wish that the Congress President would suspend

Civil Disobedience for six weeks, in order that the Harijan issue might be faced without distraction. To Nehru and others, in jail and outside, this attitude caused some concern. They regarded the removal of untouchability as subsidiary to the main struggle in which tens of thousands had suffered imprisonment, injury and loss. Aney, however, issued the order to suspend the campaign, which had slowed down considerably and, as Gandhi noted with disapproval, had resorted to extensive secrecy and 'underground' activity, contrary to the teaching of Satyagraha that secrecy is "a sin, particularly in politics".

Gandhi survived the ordeal, and on May 29 at noon he broke his fast at the end of twenty-one days by taking half a glass of fruit juice prepared by an untouchable youth. The scene in the hall of Lady Thackersey's house, where Gandhi's bed had been wheeled, was strangely reminiscent of the breaking of the fast for Hindu-Moslem unity at Delhi nine years before. But now not only the figure of Shradhdhananda was missing from the foot of the bed; both the great Swarajist leaders, Das and Motilal Nehru, were gone.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered an informal meeting of the leading Congressmen, who were still at liberty, was summoned at Poona. It rejected a proposal for the unconditional withdrawal of civil disobedience and also a motion favouring individual civil disobedience. Gandhi was asked to seek an interview with the Viceroy for arriving at a settlement. Lord Willingdon refused an interview unless civil disobedience were first withdrawn. The policy which had met Gandhi on his return from Europe had not altered. It was now agreed that mass civil disobedience should be suspended and that individual civil disobedience should continue.

Gandhi inaugurated the new phase by a characteristic act of sacrifice. He had pledged himself at the time of the Salt March not to return to the Sabarmati Ashram until India had won real freedom. Now, three years later, he disbanded the Ashram altogether, and invited his small community to join him in the renewed struggle. Land, buildings and crops he offered to the Government and received a formal one-line acknowledgment. The property was therefore made over instead to the Harijan movement.

On 1st August Gandhi was to commence a march to the

village of Ras, but the previous night he and thirty-four others from the Ashram were arrested and imprisoned. On the 4th he was released and served with an order to leave the limits of Yeravda village and to reside in Poona. Gandhi refused, and within half an hour he was re-arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

The fresh arrest gave new impetus to the campaign and several hundred Congress workers courted arrest in the following weeks, including Aney who, with thirteen companions, was arrested while starting on a march from Akola.

Now that Gandhi was a convicted prisoner the Government refused to renew the privileges of continuing Harijan work which they had reluctantly granted to him as a detainee. Gandhi thereupon began a fast in protest and on the fifth day, August 20, his condition had become so serious that he was removed to Sassoon Hospital, still a prisoner. On 23rd August it was clear that his life was in danger, and the Government—apprehensive of the consequences of his death in custody—released him unconditionally on that date.

By the middle of September he was sufficiently recovered to issue a public statement. "As a rule, during my long course of public service, the next moment's step has been clear to me, but since my unexpected release from prison on 23rd August last, darkness has surrounded me. The path of duty has, therefore, not been clear to me. My present state of health is such that it may yet take several weeks for me to regain lost strength. To seek imprisonment as soon as I was physically fit, or to restrain myself for the interrupted year, was the question before me. After hard praying and thinking I have come to the conclusion that up to the termination of the period of sentence, that is, up to 3rd August next, I must not court imprisonment by offering aggressive civil resistance." His premature release in 1924 after the appendicitis operation had led him to make a similar decision.

Jawaharlal Nehru was now at liberty and came to see him at Poona. It was more than two years since they had been together, when Jawaharlal had travelled with him in the train that was taking him to Bombay, after the agreement with Lord Willingdon had cleared the way for Gandhi's participation in the Second Round Table Conference. Nehru had been arrested on his way

to meet Gandhi on his return from Europe and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The meeting of the two leaders aroused great public interest and the essential points of their conversations were embodied in an exchange of letters, known as the Poona Statement.

Nehru made it clear that his own viewpoint had always been political and economic; he had seldom been influenced by religious or other like considerations though the moral and practical aspect of Satyagraha had always appealed to him. He discussed the application of his socialist principles to the Indian situation and declared that "the biggest vested interest in India is that of the British Government; next come the Indian Princes; and others follow". Would Gandhi agree that those vested interests must go? He also expressed misgivings about the suspension of mass civil disobedience.

Gandhi replied with equal candour. "I believe too, though I may not go as far as you do, that before India can become one homogeneous entity, the princes will have to part with much of their power and become popular representatives of the people over whom they are ruling today." On the suspension of mass civil disobedience he declared, "I am quite clear in my mind that had those instructions not been issued the whole movement of civil resistance would have collapsed through growing internal weakness . . . ." He concluded: "I have no sense of defeat in me and the hope in me that this country of ours is fast marching towards its goal is burning as bright as it did in 1920; for I have an undying faith in the efficiency of civil resistance."

Gandhi now began an extensive tour to preach the removal of untouchability. But although he felt bound to avoid courting arrest for the remainder of the year during the unexpired portion of his prison sentence, Mrs. Gandhi was under no such restraint.

Kasturbai Gandhi had never received the education which might have enabled her to share to the full the aspirations and activities of her husband, she had suffered much from the rigorous standards he imposed in his private life and the sacrifices he made in his public work. But in her unswerving loyalty to him, and in her determination to play her part in his life's work she had shown courage that made her a worthy partner. In South Africa she insisted on sharing the trials of prison life, and more than once



in India she suffered imprisonment in carrying on the work when Gandhi had been arrested.

Mrs. Gandhi was arrested on 10th January, 1932, six days after her husband had been imprisoned on his return from Europe. In March she was again arrested and this time sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment. She was free in time to join her husband in Yeravda jail during the fast which ended with the Yeravda Pact in September, only to be arrested again in February and charged with attempting to hold an illegal meeting. She was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a further six months if an additional fine was not paid. In August when released with fifteen other women, she was ordered to go to a specified area, and on refusing to accept the restriction was immediately re-arrested. In November 1933 she was once more arrested on the way to Ras where she intended to hold a meeting, and was imprisoned for the sixth time in two years.

Miss Slade had been arrested with Mrs. Gandhi in January 1932 and sentenced to three month's imprisonment for ignoring a police order to leave Bombay. In August she was again arrested and sentenced to a year's imprisonment for disobeying an order prohibiting her from returning to the same city. Sarojini Naidu, the poet, and other women also suffered heavily.

After his wife's arrest Gandhi continued his tour and was addressing huge meetings in the South of India when on January 15, 1934, a terrible calamity occurred in North Bihar. One of the worst earthquakes of recent times devastated an area as large as Holland and thousands were killed and buried in the wreckage of towns and villages. Gandhi offered his services to Rajendra Prasad, who, more than any other of the Congress leaders, had accepted the full faith of non-violence. Rajendra Prasad was in charge of the Central Relief Committee in Bihar and like Vallabhbhai Patel in the Gujarat floods he distinguished himself by heroic and untiring work for the stricken peasantry. Rajendra Prasad would not draw Gandhi from his work in the South for a time, for he knew that Gandhi wished if possible to complete his tour before coming North.

Jawaharlal, however, after speaking at Calcutta and visiting Rabindranath Tagore at Santiniketan went to Bihar and toured the devastated area to make a report. He returned to Alla-

habad utterly exhausted by his efforts, but before he could draft the report he was once more arrested and thrown into prison.

There he heard news of Gandhi that horrified him. Gandhi, crushed to pieces by the disaster, as he said, saw in it the hand of God. It was, he declared, a punishment for the sins of India. "I ask myself what that sin can be to warrant such a calamity. The conviction is growing upon me that this calamity has come upon us on account of the atrocious sin of untouchability. I am not given to appealing to the superstitious fears of men, but I cannot help telling you what is going on deep down in my heart today."

For to him the 'divine calamity' had been essentially a proof that all humanity is one. In the face of disaster the differences of creed, caste and race had vanished and humanity which would not unite in love and brotherhood, had united in misfortune. He did not interpret this chastisement as an exclusive punishment for the sin of untouchability. It was open to others to read in it divine wrath against many other sins.

Nehru had no opportunity then to publish the protests which arose in him with all the force of his fine integrity, but his view found a formidable spokesman in Rabindranath Tagore. Once more Tagore, who had written often in praise of Gandhi stood forth as he had at the time of the burning of foreign cloth, and rebuked his great contemporary. He described Gandhi's view as unscientific and materialistic. "If we associate the ethical principles with cosmic phenomena," he wrote scornfully, "we shall have to admit that human nature is morally superior to a Providence that preaches lessons on good behaviour in orgies of the worst behaviour possible. For we can never imagine any civilised ruler of men making indiscriminate examples of casual victims, including children and members of the untouchable community themselves, in order to impress others dwelling at a safe distance who possibly deserve severer condemnation."

Gandhi's position was not, of course, amenable to argument of this kind. His impregnable reply was, "I am not God. Therefore I have but a limited knowledge of His purpose." But he had an unlimited and unflinching honesty which compelled him to proclaim his intuitions even if he could not defend them, which would have led him to confess any truth that he had

come to believe even if to do so were to destroy his influence over the people of India.

Rajendra Prasad could wait no longer and he wrote asking Gandhi to come as soon as possible. He arrived on the night of 11th March at Patna, and at once began a tour of the area in company with Rajendra Prasad and an English friend, Agatha Harrison. Miss Harrison sent C.F. Andrews in London a vivid description of the tour. "As we neared a village or town," she wrote, "human walls would press in almost to the point of suffocation in an effort to see this much-loved man—Mahatma Gandhi. Sometimes through sheer fatigue he would curl up on the back seat and sleep and I would talk with Rajendra Prasad. As we neared a village, and the motor slowed down, Rajendra Prasad on one side, and the chauffeur on the other, would lean out and call out softly in Hindustani, 'He sleeps'. These words would be echoed by the people. But even this did not deter them from pressing around the car, though quite quietly, in an effort to see Mr. Gandhi. From my vantage-point I saw the expression on their faces, and was dumb. For it was as though they had seen a god."

Thus one night after a tiring journey over cracked roads and across crazy temporary bridges the car bumped into Motihari, where Gandhi had lived during the Champaran campaign in 1917. As he toured through the familiar countryside, now monstrously changed by disaster, he had but one message. "Work! Work! Do not beg, but work. Ask for work to do, and do it faithfully." To the members of the local relief committee he explained that no agency, whether it were Government or Congress, could cope single-handed with the emergency. It needed the perfectly co-ordinated effort of all. And that co-operation must be tendered freely and whole-heartedly, not grudgingly or haltingly. What could be more absurd than to talk of non-co-operation to a man dying of thirst? Should he refuse water from a well sunk by the Government? Non-co-operation did not exclude humanity, common sense or discrimination. All must work in harmony. Out of the disaster he must bring forth unity.

During his day of silence on Easter Monday April 2, 1934, Gandhi drew up a remarkable statement in which he criticised the "indifferent civil resistance of many", and in particular the

action of one of his companions who was found reluctant to perform the full prison task, preferring his private studies. The significance of this defect which Gandhi describes as "undoubtedly contrary to the rule of Satyagraha" is debatable. In some circumstances such preference is clearly compatible with Satyagraha, since Gandhi had himself fasted to obtain privileges to carry on his Harijan work while a convicted prisoner. Probably the breath of discipline consisted in ignoring the tacit agreement to submit to all prison rules, except where conscience or self-respect was challenged.

Gandhi's statement is a brief but outstanding exposition of Satyagraha. "I feel," he wrote, "that the masses have not received the full message of Satyagraha owing to its adulteration in the process of transmission. It has become clear to me that spiritual instruments suffer in their potency when their use is taught through non-spiritual media.... Satyagraha is a purely spiritual weapon. It may be used for what appear to be mundane ends, and through men and women who do not understand it spiritually, provided the director knows that the weapon is spiritual.... The very nature of the science of Satyagraha precludes the student from seeing more than the step immediately in front of him."

"Unadulterated Satyagraha," he concluded, "must touch the hearts of both (terrorists and rulers). To test the truth of the proposition, Satyagraha needs to be confined to one qualified person at a time. The trial has never been made. It must be made now." Limited individual civil disobedience had become civil disobedience limited to a single individual.

While Gandhi was writing these words a gathering of prominent Congressmen met at Delhi, with Dr. Ansari as president, and decided to revive the All-India Swaraj Party, to organise the voters, contest the elections, and carry out the constructive programme of Congress. Gandhi's advice on suspension of civil disobedience—or rather its limitation to himself—suited them perfectly.

To Jawaharlal Nehru in prison the news came "with such a stab of pain, I felt the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped. For long a mental tussle had been going on within me. I had not understood or appreciated much that Gandhiji had done. His fasts and his

concentration on other issues during the continuance of Civil Disobedience, when his comrades were in the grip of the struggle, his personal and self-created entanglements, which led him to the extraordinary position that, while out of prison, he was yet pledged to himself not to take part in the political movement, his new loyalties and pledges which put in the shade the old loyalty and pledge and job, undertaken together with many colleagues, while yet that job was unfinished, had all oppressed me.... And now? Suddenly I felt very lonely in that cell of Alipore jail. Life seemed to be a very dreary affair, a very wilderness of desolation. Of the many hard lessons that I had learnt, the hardest and the most painful now faced me; that it is not possible in any vital matter to rely on any one. One must journey through life alone; to rely on others is to invite heartbreak."

It was perhaps the lesson that Gandhi had been trying to teach; reliance on one's own highest conception of truth and loyalty to one's own vision. For the present, Gandhi saw what Nehru still did not see, that the second battle was over, the time to recognise that fact had come. The second great wave of non-violent revolution had burst and spent itself, and still the rock of foreign rule stood. But the sea would recoil only to gather strength and then again the great wave would roll forward, and the time must come when the rock would be hidden altogether beneath the rising tide.

Once more Gandhi threw himself into the Harijan work. He told the Harijans of his own childhood, and of Uka, the family sweeper. He told them how he too had been treated as an 'untouchable' by white men in South Africa. He told them of the untouchable family who had joined his ashram and of the little outcast girl whom he had adopted after overcoming with difficulty the objections of Mrs. Gandhi.

The meetings were object-lessons. He would ask the crowd to allow the untouchables among them. If they would not do so he would take his place among the untouchables and address the meeting from there.

In June he narrowly escaped assassination. At a public function at Poona a bomb was thrown at a car which reached the scene a few moments before Gandhi's and was mistaken for it. Seven persons were injured, but none

seriously. There were two other attempts on his life within a month.

In July an irate reformer cut open with a lathi the head of Pandit Lalnath, a determined opponent of the Harijan movement, and Gandhi fasted for seven days as a penance against the intolerance shown by opponents towards each other in public controversies. Collecting funds for social reform work was scarcely less eventful than trying to wrest home rule from a foreign government.

For a time he even gave up the railway and his car, and toured in Orissa on foot.

The fast in July had been carried out at Wardha which was now to become the centre of Gandhi's activities. Soon the year which had to elapse before he would feel free to resume participation in active politics would be up, and there was much speculation as to what Gandhi would do. The rumour began to spread that he would leave the Congress altogether, and in a long statement on September 17, Gandhi confirmed it and gave his reasons.

"....A very large body of Congress intelligentsia were tired of my method and views, and programme based on them," he said simply. "I was a hindrance rather than a help to the natural growth of the Congress....Instead of remaining the most democratic and representative organisation, it was dominated by my personality....This is a humiliating revelation to a born democrat -I make that claim of complete identification with the poorest of mankind, an intense longing to live no better than they, and a corresponding conscious effort to approach that level to the best one's ability can to make it."

"....Take non-violence. After 14 years of trial, it still remains a policy with the majority of Congressmen, whereas it is a fundamental creed with me....For this experiment to which my life is dedicated, I need complete detachment and absolute freedom of action. Satyagraha, of which civil resistance is but a part, is to me the universal law of life. *Satya*, i.e., truth, is my God. I can only search Him through non-violence and in no other way. And the freedom of my country, as of the world, is surely included in the search for Truth. I cannot suspend this search for anything in this world or another. I have entered the political life in pursuit of this search...."

"Personally, I would like to bury myself in an Indian village, preferably in a Frontier village." For although Civil Disobedience was withdrawn and most of the volunteer organisations had been made lawful, on the Frontier the Servants of God were still suppressed and Ghaffar Khan and his brother, only lately released, were still forbidden to return to their homeland.

Gandhi concluded by proposing a number of amendments to the Congress constitution which he subsequently sponsored at the Bombay Congress in October where they were all partially or wholly adopted. The Congress begged Gandhi to reconsider his decision to retire, but he would not be moved. His work now lay in the villages, and with the All-India Village Industries Association.

History had repeated itself, as nearly as history ever does. After the Non-Co-operation campaign in the early twenties Gandhi had virtually left the control of Congress to the Swarajists, and then when the next wave gathered itself together he had come back to lead the Civil Disobedience campaigns, in which larger numbers of more disciplined followers had carried on the struggle which had been postponed after the disaster at Chauri-Chaura. Now the second wave was spent, the Swarajists were again in control and Gandhi once more turned his face to the villages and his work among the poor.

Still many Indians and more Europeans did not understand. The old cry of the middle twenties was heard again. Gandhi was finished. He had finally lost his hold on Indian politics and could safely be regarded as a back number. Non-violence had again failed to free India and that too would soon be discredited. But Gandhi, the thin little man of sixty-five, was at peace as he went among his people. He knew that the third wave would come, and after that the fourth, and sooner or later, in his lifetime or after, the rock would be submerged. As he strode along the dusty roads he often prayed that his people in their blindness and impatience, their eagerness to grasp at power, and at the prospect of material prosperity, would not be tempted to abandon the way of truth and peace for the road of violence and destruction. Dimly, confusedly, they had known non-violence for fourteen years now. Not wholly understanding, with false hopes and mixed motives, they had thrown themselves into battle, and through sacrifice, self-control and

truthfulness had found self-respect and the true self-government that springs from it. So many Indians already had won Swaraj. So many more would do so. Could they not see?

He trudged on along the road, walking quickly despite age, frailty and the heat of the sun. There were other tasks to be attempted, and the years were slipping by. What was it Jawaharlal had asked him about? The Princes. Something would have to be done about the Princes. He lifted his head and looked towards the horizon. His smiling tender eyes seemed to look beyond it to something more remote and for a moment they were clouded with pain. He had tried to serve the world by serving India. Only through the right use of one's immediate environment could one produce good results at a distance. Certainly the circle had widened. Charlie Andrews for instance ... Now there were things to be said and done on the world stage. In Europe the poisoned civilisation was approaching crisis. The depression that had swept over the world was like the first cold wind before the coming storm.

War. Yes, there would be war. Not the wars of Spain, China and Abyssinia, but total war. How quickly the dark clouds had gathered ! If there had been time to free India by non-violence, perhaps there would have been a chance for Europe to learn that it is possible to fight for freedom without killing, that ultimately only non-violence vindicates right and serves the truth. But there had not been time to complete in one continent the experiment which could have averted a world catastrophe. If he spoke to the world, they would not heed him, they would not understand, because the task in India was still unfinished. Silence, then? No! The truth must be proclaimed, and there must be some who would hear and understand. Charlie Andrews. Were there many in England like dear, muddled, blessed Charlie Andrews? A vision rose up of the people in Kingsley Hall on the Saturday night when he first came among them, of the gaunt, shrewd Lancashire cotton-operatives. His face cleared.

He knew that the time would come when he must speak to the world.



## CHAPTER X

### INDIA SPEAKS—GANDHI PROCLAIMS SATYAGRAHA TO THE WORLD

TOWARDS the end of 1934 Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother stayed for a time with Gandhi at Wardha. They had just been released from prison and were still forbidden to return to their own Frontier Province. Gandhi came to know and love the Pathan leader, and the tireless Mahadev Desai was encouraged to prepare a short memoir in which are many striking facts about the Khudai Khidmatgars (servants of God) and their struggles. In December Khan was to leave to take up village work in Bengal, but on the eve of his departure he was once more arrested, and charged with having made a seditious speech in Bombay.

Some months later Gandhi was visiting a plague centre where Vallabhbhai Patel with a corps of volunteers was trying to help the stricken villagers, and he took the opportunity to go on to Sabarmati to see Khan in jail. He had not been to Sabarmati since the day he had marched off down the road to Dandi and the sea, at the head of the volunteers from the Satyagraha Ashram, vowed never to return until Swaraj was won. Later the Ashram had been abandoned, and the community was now housed at Wardha, the original buildings being given to Harijan reformers as a school for untouchable children.

On leaving the jail he was persuaded to see the school and so found himself once more among the familiar buildings, surrounded by excited, inquisitive little girls. He talked to the children, asking them about their work, who were their teachers, what they were taught. "Carding," said one. "Spinning," said another. "Music," said a third. "Breakfast," said a fourth and the party dissolved into laughter. At last it was time to go. "So our play is finished," said Gandhi, "and I shall say goodbye. Shall I?" "No, no!"

"Why? Do you want to ask me anything? Out with it."

"Tell us why you did not stay with us."

"Because you did not invite me, and Budhabhai did."

"We too would have invited you. But you will not stay with us. Tell us why not."

"I shall stay with you when you have won Swaraj."

"It was all right so long as it was your Ashram," argued one of the girls. "You would not stay in your own Ashram again, until you had Swaraj. But the Ashram no longer belongs to you. It is the Harijan Ashram. Why will you not stay with us?"

Gandhi laughed his appreciation of her reasoning and promised, "When I come next time..." For the present his place was at Wardha.

From the new Ashram at Wardha, Desai and the other workers were engaged in a concentrated effort to test and vindicate the programme of village reconstruction and the revival of cottage industries, in the adjacent hamlet of Sindi. They worked as scavengers, explained the value of dung as manure, dug pits, cleared roads. They published through *Harijan* weekly reports on their work, and discussed vigorously the most healthy minimum diet for the workers themselves, and for those villagers who could be interested. They produced scientific evidence on the superior value of unpolished rice, they explained the virtues of the soya bean, they described *neem* leaves and green vegetables that grew wild in the country and might be had for the taking. There were dissertations on the properties of *gur* (unrefined sugar) and the virtues of the tamarind. Simple articles on vitamins, on the importance of a balanced diet, were published for the guidance of other workers. Snakes were classified and simple treatments for snake-bite explained. Always the significance of the spinning wheel and the importance of hand-spun and woven cloth were emphasized.

Among those in Gandhi's community was a recluse, Bhansali, and Desai has recorded some of the conversations between the two men. Bhansali was disposed to exempt himself from labour in order to develop his perception of reality, while Gandhi's view might be epitomised in the fine words of Tagore. "...The true striving in the quest of truth consists not in the neglect of action but in the effort to attune it close to the eternal harmony."

Bhansali admitted that the suffering of mankind brought him misery, but declared his helplessness.

"Only one who has exhausted all efforts may say that he

can do nothing more," Gandhi answered. "If he has a lame person to attend to, he will give him all the attention that he is capable of. This one act of service will mean the service of humanity."

"But I could not exclusively devote my attention to relieving the misery of the distressed. I would do a little bit, but I should feel powerless."

"The world is sustained by sacrifice and service. As the *Gita* says, 'The Lord created the beings with the duty of sacrifice cast on them.'"

"I know," Bhansali said meekly, "but are not meditation and worship too a sacred duty?"

"Meditation and worship are not exclusive things like jewels to be kept locked up in a strong box. They must be seen in every act of ours. But I will not press you for a reply today. I simply want to set you thinking about this."

Eventually Bhansali began to spin, and then came the time when he undertook to work silently for eight hours a day.

Inevitably there were some who scorned the whole effort to revive village industry and the spinning-wheel. Industrialism, said the socialists, was the only solution for India's poverty and hunger, and Gandhi's attitude towards the machine was medieval. "Is not this wheel a machine?" Gandhi asked one of these critics. "I do not mean this machine, but I mean bigger machinery." "Do you mean Singer's sewing machine? That too is protected by the village industries movement, and for that matter any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave."

"But what about the great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity?"

"Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the State would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do? Will you give them work, or would you have their owners cut them down for want of work? I would prize every invention of science

made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the asphyxiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of many. But even you as a socialist would not be in favour of an indiscriminate use of machinery. Take printing presses. They will go on. Take surgical instruments. How can one make them with one's hands? Heavy machinery would be needed for them. But there is no machinery for the cure of idleness, but this," said Gandhi pointing to his spinning-wheel. "I can work it whilst I am carrying on this conversation with you, and am adding a little to the wealth of the country. The machine no one can oust."

Although he had retired from 'politics', prominent Congressmen often came to consult him, and sometimes important committee meetings took place at Wardha. His friends were surprised and a little exasperated to be kept waiting while Gandhi explained to a number of local shoemakers how to design and sew a particular sort of sandal that was needed by the workers. He had picked up the craft in South Africa and practised it on Tolstoy Farm. During one of his long terms of imprisonment he had employed part of his time in making a pair of sandals for General Smuts, a gift which the statesman who had imprisoned him, prized highly in his later years.

The friends were alarmed too, when they found Gandhi with a poisonous snake coiled round his neck placidly attending to a man who claimed to teach the handling of snakes and the cure of bites. For the latter part of the demonstration someone had to be bitten by the snake and Gandhi unhesitatingly volunteered. But this his companions would not endure and the experiment was finally given up when the snake positively declined to bite anyone in the Ashram.

Some news came to him from abroad, to remind him that the sands were running out swiftly in Europe. Jawaharlal wrote once from Germany, grimly critical of the Nazi Winter Help

Collections "supposed to be voluntary but practically compulsory". The Italian invasion of Abyssinia moved him to send to an American periodical a message which is worthy of note as one of the first of his appeals against the new wave of darkness that was to sweep the world.

"Not to believe in the possibility of permanent peace is to disbelieve in the godliness of human nature. Methods hitherto adopted have failed because rock-bottom sincerity on the part of those who have striven has been lacking. Not that they have realised this lack. Peace is unobtainable by part performance of conditions, even as chemical combination is impossible without complete fulfilment of conditions of attainment thereof. If the recognised leaders of mankind who have control over engines of destruction were wholly to renounce their use with full knowledge of the implications, permanent peace can be obtained. This is clearly impossible without the great Powers of the earth renouncing their imperialistic designs. This again seems impossible without these great nations ceasing to believe in soul-destroying competition and the desire to multiply wants and therefore increase their material possessions. It is my conviction that the root of the evil is want of a living faith in a living God. It is a first class human tragedy that peoples of the earth who claim to believe in the message of Jesus, whom they describe as the Prince of Peace, show little of that belief in actual practice. It is painful to see sincere Christian divines limiting the scope of Jesus's message to select individuals. I have been taught from my childhood and I have tested the truth by experience, that the primary virtues of mankind are possible of cultivation by the meanest of the human species. It is this undoubted universal possibility that distinguishes the human from the rest of God's creation. If even one great nation were unconditionally to perform the supreme act of renunciation, many of us would see in our life-time visible peace established on earth."

But although Gandhi remained at Wardha throughout most of the year 1935, he was working at a stretch beyond even his capacity for endurance, and in December his health broke down. To a Japanese poet who was allowed to see him for a few moments, and found him lying in his bed with a wet-earth bandage on his head, he explained with a simile, "I sprang from Indian

earth and so it is Indian earth that crowns me”.

In January he was taken to Bombay and he bade farewell to the community before he went. As Miraben bowed before him, he thought of the courage with which she had worked, first from the Ashram, then moving into a wretched hut in Sindi, and then—since she thought Sindi only ‘a slum of Wardha’, and not a real village, she had gone five miles away to live alone at Segaoon and to work there. “How is it,” he asked gently, “that no one is worried about you living all alone in the midst of thousands of men, and that all trust you? What have you done to deserve that trust?”

“I have done nothing. It is your doing.”

“But I have not treated you with any partiality, as you know to your cost!”

“Even then it is you who have put fearlessness into me, the fearlessness to live one’s life in the midst of millions.”

In Bombay his health improved slowly, although the illness had weakened for a while his perfect self-control, and he was troubled once by a disturbing physical desire to which he confessed in his journal. In February his temperature returned to normal and by the end of the month he was able to go again to Wardha, by way of Bardoli where he spoke at several meetings.

At the end of May came a wounding report of his eldest son, Harilal Gandhi. This dissolute young man had given himself over to drink and the pleasures of the brothel, and had ceased to support his wife and three children. He had written to the Press a few weeks before threatening to go over to Christianity or Islam, and making it clear that he was available to the highest bidder. He was offered work by the Nagpur Municipality and then published another letter cancelling the first and declaring emphatic adherence to his ancestral faith. But now he had embraced Islam and the papers were full of the celebrations in the Mosque.

Gandhi in *Harijan* published all these facts in an article *To My Numerous Muslim Friends* which must have cost him much to write. “Harilal knew that if he had told me that he had found the key to a right life and peace in Islam, I would have put no obstacle in his path. But no one of us, including his son now twenty-four years old, and who is with me, knew anything about the event till we saw the announcement in the Press.”

He begged his Moslem friends to examine Harilal and if they found that his conversion was a soulless matter to tell him plainly and disown him; but if they discovered sincerity to see that he would be protected against temptations. "I do not mind whether he is known as Abdulla or Harilal if by adopting one name or the other he becomes a true devotee of God which both names mean." At about the same time Kasturbai arranged for an open letter she had written to Harilal to be published, imploring him to mend his ways and to cease causing his parents such grief and anxiety.

Gandhi now resolved to go himself to Segaoon and to live there serving the village people. "He who is not ready for small reforms will never be ready for great reforms," he had written a few months earlier. "One must forget the political goal in order to realise it."

"That is why I can take the keenest interest in discussing vitamins and leafy vegetables and unpolished rice. That is why it has become a matter of absorbing interest to me to find out how best to clean our latrines, how best to save our people from the heinous sin of fouling Mother Earth every morning. I do not quite see how thinking of these necessary problems and finding a solution for them has no political significance, and how an examination of the financial policy of Government has necessarily a political bearing. What I am clear about is that the work I am doing and asking the masses to do is such as can be done by millions of people, whereas the work of examining the policy of our rulers will be beyond them. That it is a few people's business I will not dispute. Let those who are qualified to do so do it as best as they can. But until these leaders can bring great changes into being, why should not millions like me use the gifts that God has given them to the best advantage? Why should they not make their bodies fitter instruments of service? Why should they not clear their own doors and environments of dirt and filth? Why should they be always in the grip of disease and incapable of helping themselves or anyone else?... Many years experience has convinced me that the activities that absorb my energies and attention are calculated to achieve the nation's freedom, that therein lies the secret of non-violent freedom. That is why I invite everyone, man and woman,

young and old, to contribute his or her share to the great sacrifice."

By the middle of June he was ready and he set out from Wardha in drizzling rain that soon became a downpour. He walked on through the mud, and in three hours came to Segaon, where he was to live in a one-room hut which he shared with a young untouchable, and one or two other people. "We all know that conditions of life in a village are particularly hard in the monsoon," he remarked imperturbably. "Why then should I not begin with that rich experience and wait until conditions were better?" He advised everyone coming to Segaon to walk, and not to think of a cart. Often he himself made the journey to and from Wardha on foot, for Segaon had no proper road, no shop where foodstuffs might be bought, no post-office, and inevitably there were communications he must deal with and consultations in which he must share.

Miraben had written of the beauty of her journey on the evening when first she walked to Segaon a few months before, afraid at first of being benighted and then lost in the wonder of the sunset. "...Instead of darkness coming there came a rosy light across the land. The sun had gathered about his setting head a delicate veil of cloud, stretching far up into the sky and on to this he cast his rays; brighter and brighter became the glow—where I had expected to be groping in the dusk, I was walking briskly by a roseate light. My heart throbbed with joyous thanksgiving. Gradually the light faded. As I slipped across the last brook, the stars were already twinkling over the white tower of the little Harijan temple. But the glow was still with me even till I reached home." And there were moonlit nights when she would stop to rest in the fields, amid the silent corn and the tall motionless palm trees silhouetted against the sky.

Gandhi knew these joys too. "I am content with my four bare walls," he once said to a student who was questioning him about art. "I hardly need a roof over my head. When I gaze at the star-sown heaven, and the infinite beauty it affords my eyes, that means more to me than all that human art can give me. That does not mean that I ignore the value of those works generally called artistic; but, personally, in comparison with the infinite beauty of nature, I feel their unreality too intensely."



So Gandhi became a villager. "He stopped at the thresholds of the huts of the thousands of dispossessed, dressed like one of their own," Tagore once wrote of him. "He spoke to them in their own language; here was the living truth at last and not only quotations from books. For this reason the 'Mahatma', the name given to him by the people of India, is his real name. Who else has felt like him that all Indians are his own flesh and blood? In direct contact with truth, the crushed forces of the soul rise again; when love came to the door of India, that door was opened wide.... At Gandhi's call India blossomed forth to new greatness, just as once before in earlier times, when Buddha proclaimed the truth of fellow feeling and compassion among all living creatures." Not that Gandhi liked to be called 'Mahatma'. In the Ashram they called him 'Bapu'—father, and that gave him the joy of being acknowledged one of the human family and not a solitary being standing apart on an exalted plane of achievement and isolation.

Segaon was terribly unhealthy and during a malaria outbreak in September Gandhi succumbed but made a quick recovery, and when Jawaharlal and Rajendra Prasad came to the village to see him they found him too busy giving wet-sheet packs and hip baths to two other patients on his verandah, to spare much time for talk.

The Congress session at the end of 1936 was held in a village for the first time in the history of the Movement. The suggestion had been Gandhi's; he wanted Congress to show in this way that they recognised their obligations to the masses who lived in the 700,000 villages of India, and Gandhi himself went to Faizpur, and from there south to Travancore.

A month before, in November, had come the Maharaja's announcement, throwing open all the Hindu temples in Travancore State to the Harijans, and Gandhi went on pilgrimage to some of these ancient and famous shrines. The visit raised many memories of three other occasions when he had been to Travancore, first to plead with the orthodox Hindus and the State to allow the suppressed classes to use public roads, and again on a *khadi* tour. The third visit had been in 1934 just before he had been summoned to Bihar by the earthquake disaster, and then he had addressed a meeting under the shadow of the imposing walls of the temple at Tiruwattar, believed to

be the most ancient in Travancore. "The temple doors are closed against us to-day," he had said, "but, God willing, they will have to be opened to us soon." Now three years later he sat on the top of a high flight of steps leading to the temple and spoke to a crowd of ten thousand people. "The sins of past ages have been obliterated by literally a stroke of the pen... Let Namboodiris and other Brahmins and the so-called high caste people of Travancore rise to the occasion and be voluntarily Harijans among Harijans, servants of God, and let all the world know by their action that in virtue of the Proclamation there is none high and none low but all are equal in the eyes of God."

Now he could enter the ancient shrines, for he had long held himself excluded from going into temples from which Harijans were barred. In Tiruwattar there were huge images of Lord Vishnu reclining on the thousand-hooded cobra and the deep religious significance of the symbol swept over him as he stood there in awe and veneration.

On the third day of the pilgrimage his journey took him to Cape Comorin, "in front of the sea where three waters meet and furnish a sight unequalled in the world", and then he turned north again and spoke in many places in Travancore. The behaviour of the people, the ancient temples with their figures of Brahma, Krishna, Rama and Vishnu, the meditations at Cape Comorin, had borne fruit, and now he preached to the people the essence of Hinduism, and of all religions, in a single mantra from the Upanishads:

"God the Ruler pervades all there is in this Universe. Therefore renounce and dedicate all to Him and then enjoy or use the portion that may fall to thy lot. Never covet anybody's possessions."

"The mantra describes God as the Creator, the Ruler, and the Lord. The seer to whom this mantra or verse was revealed was not satisfied with the magnificent statement that God was to be found everywhere. But he went further and said: 'Since God pervades everything nothing belongs to you, not even your own body. God is the undisputed, unchallengeable Master of everything you possess.' And so when a person who calls himself a Hindu goes through the process of regeneration or a second birth, as the Christians would call it,

he has to perform a dedication or renunciation of all that he has in ignorance called his own property. And then when he has performed this act of dedication or renunciation, he is told that he will win a reward in the shape of God taking good care of what he will require for food, clothing or housing. Therefore the conditions of enjoyment or use of the necessities of life is their dedication or renunciation. And that dedication or renunciation has got to be done from day to day, lest we may in this busy world forget the central fact of life. And to crown all, the seer says: 'Covet not anybody's riches.' I suggest to you that the truth that is embedded in this very short mantra is calculated to satisfy the craving of every human being—whether they have reference to this world or to the next. I have in my search of the scriptures of the world found nothing to add to this mantra. Looking back upon all the little I have read of the scriptures—it is precious little I confess—I feel that everything good in all the scriptures is derived from this mantra. If it is universal brotherhood—not only brotherhood of all human beings, but of all living beings—I find it in this mantra. If it is unshakeable faith in the Lord and Master—and all the objectives you can think of—I find it in this mantra. If it is the idea of complete surrender to God and of the faith that he will supply all that I need, then again I say I find it in this mantra. Since He pervades every fibre of my being and of all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth, and it should satisfy the craving of all philosophical communists. This mantra tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God, and if my life and that of all who believe in this mantra has to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service to our fellow creatures.

"This, I say, is my faith and should be the faith of all who call themselves Hindus. And I venture to suggest to my Christian and Mussalman friends that they will find nothing more in their scriptures if they will search them . . ."

He returned now to Segaoon and his work there. The tour in Travancore had been the blossom-time of his work for the suppressed classes. He had spoken his message, he had preached his faith. In one great State he had seen the temples thrown open and the Hindu community reunited. Always

he would stand for the removal of the blot on Hinduism, but just as the period of maximum appeal for communal unity had come and gone, as one point after another in the social programme had been stressed—now hand-spinning, now the abolition of prostitution, now the use of Hindi as a universal language for India to bridge the gap between province and province—so the turn of the suppressed classes had come and passed away. The period which had begun with the first Harijan fast in September 1932 closed with the tour in Travancore in January 1937. Other subjects began to occupy the pages of Harijan—prohibition, and a new concept of education for the children of India. "My God is myriad-formed," he wrote, "and while sometimes I see Him in the spinning-wheel, at other times I see Him in communal unity, then again in removal of untouchability; and that is how I establish communion with Him according as the spirit moves me."

As they were at rayer on the verandah one morning in May while it was still dark, a heavily-built European came upon them out of the night. It was Kallenbach. They had known he was coming, for he had cabled from Aden, but still they had scarcely dared to expect him. The two men had not met since those sombre days in London at the beginning of the Great War when Gandhi had striven to get permission for his friend to accompany him to India. The permission had been refused and Kallenbach had become once more an internee in a prison camp on the Isle of Man, from which he was released only in February 1918 in an exchange of prisoners. After the war he had gone back to South Africa, but not to the simple life he had shared with Gandhi. He had built up a considerable business as an architect and the demands of the business had been too insistent for him to come to India, though he had shared many of Gandhi's fasts.

"After how many years?", asked Gandhi, as the great German with his almost leonine face bent low before him. "Let me see your features more closely in the light," he said gently, picking up a lantern. "So the hair has all turned grey," and he pulled a shock of it. "Oh, yes, I am only a year and a half younger than you," Kallenbach answered gaily. "I hope you had a nice voyage," Gandhi continued with a twinkle in his eye, "You came first or second?" With a hearty

laugh, the German replied, "Not so bad as that. I came tourist class. I knew that would be the first question you would ask me."

For Desai it was an opportunity not to be missed. In the days that followed he drew from Kallenbach one story after another of the early days in South Africa. Kallenbach was adamant about the story of the binoculars. Gandhi had not thrown one pair over-board, he declared, he had thrown both pairs. And that business of taking only one meal a day for a few months, during part of the time in South Africa; a few months, indeed Gandhi had lived like that for a year and he, Kallenbach, had done likewise. A new note came into his voice as he answered Desai's questions about his business. For years after the war he had imported considerable quantities of goods from Germany. But four years ago he had cancelled these orders totalling many thousands of pounds, as a protest against the persecution of the Jews by Hitler. For Kallenbach, too, was a Jew, as well as a German. Once more the storm that was gathering in Europe had stirred a little eddy in the warm air around the Ashram.

The Round Table Conferences—there had been a third session at the end of 1932 while Gandhi was in prison in India and the list of delegates from British India had been headed by the wealthy Aga Khan—had finally led to the Government of India Act in 1935. The Act greatly increased the power of the Provincial Government and introduced the system of 'dyarchy' at the centre, foreign affairs and defence remaining the concern of the Governor-General. The Act was wholly unacceptable to the Congress, since it failed conspicuously to give them the substance of 'complete independence', by leaving the issue of war and peace outside popular control. If the European situation exploded in general war, India might be dragged in against her will. But although the Act was so disappointing to the Nationalists, and although Dr. Ansari, the new Swarajist leader, had died in May 1936, the Congress decided to accept office in the provinces in order to work for independence from within the Councils. Gandhi himself had successfully pressed for office-acceptance in the All-India Congress Committee's meeting in March which discussed the situation arising from sweeping Congress victories in the Provin-

cial elections. Congress had polled nearly 70 per cent of the votes cast, and Congress Ministries were formed in seven Provinces; later on Congress took office in two others, thus controlling nine out of eleven Provinces of 'British India'.

"In the greater part of India," Gandhi wrote in October 1937, "the Congress is both in office and power. It is true that the power is limited. But it is limited in terms of Complete Independence, not otherwise." Now Congress had its chance to bring in substantial reforms. They could introduce prohibition. They could revolutionise education. They cut down the enormous administrative costs.

Gandhi was again in poor health, but he would not spare himself. Always he had opposed the excessive amount of attention devoted to the teaching of English, and of subjects in English, to Indian children, remembering his own schooling and the day in the Rajkot High School when his faulty spelling in the foreign language had brought him such embarrassment and confusion. On Tolstoy Farm in South Africa he had perforce to turn school-teacher for many of the children, and he had taught them useful things to do with their hands. That had led to his advocacy of the spinning wheel for the Indian villagers, and his insistence on spinning as an essential part of the curriculum for students in the national schools. But now after his experiences in Segaoon, where he had been for more than a year, he saw that in primary education for the children of India, all subjects should be taught through a handicraft. He began to elaborate the idea through the columns of *Harijan*.

"I should combine into one," he wrote, "what you call now the primary education and secondary or high school education. It is my conviction that our children get nothing more in the high schools than a half-baked knowledge of English, besides a superficial knowledge of mathematics and history and geography, some of which they had learnt in their own language in the primary classes. If you cut out English from the curriculum altogether, without cutting out the subjects you teach, you can make the children go through the whole course in seven years, instead of eleven, besides giving them manual work whereby they can make a fair return to the State. Manual work will have to be the very centre of the whole thing."

Gandhi was in fact proposing, as Desai pointed out, a

method of tuition embodying Rousseau's maxim. "Do as much as possible of your teaching by doing, and fall back on words only when doing is out of the question." Still there were misunderstandings; many supposed that Gandhi was preaching manual work as an alternative to other studies rather than as a basis of instruction, and he had to explain patiently.

"A carpenter teaches me carpentry. I shall learn it mechanically from him, and as a result I shall know the use of various tools, but that will hardly develop my intellect. But if the same thing is taught to me by one who has taken a scientific training in carpentry, he will stimulate my intellect too. Not only shall I then have become an expert carpenter but also an engineer. For the expert will have taught me mathematics, also told me the differences between various kinds of timber, the place where they come from, giving me thus a knowledge of geography and also a little knowledge of agriculture. He will also have taught me to draw models of my tools, and given me a knowledge of elementary geometry and arithmetic. I must confess that all I have up to now said is that manual training must be given side by side with intellectual training, and that it should have a principal place in national education. But now I say that the principal means of stimulating the intellect should be manual training." He went on to make the startling proposal that such a system of education should aim at becoming self-sufficient, at least as to its running costs, the products of the children being purchased by the State. Towards the end of the year an All-India Education Conference met at Wardha, over which Gandhi presided. His plans for reorganising national education were accepted by the educationists and the full report which appeared as a supplement to *Harijan* on 11th December 1937 is a document of exceptional interest.

Soon afterwards he went to Calcutta and threw himself into negotiations over the release of the large number of political prisoners, of whom many were suspected of terrorism. Gandhi stayed with the brothers, Sarat and Subhas Bose, the latter one of the most forceful figures in the Indian scene. Bengal has had a fiery record since the days of Lokamanya Tilak, and Subhas Chandra Bose, who had been closely associated with C.R. Das, was believed to be deeply implicated in violent and

terrorist activities, although his remarkable abilities and fervent patriotism were admitted by all.

As a result of Gandhi's efforts and after interviews with many of the detainees, the Government announced the release of eleven hundred prisoners, although four hundred and fifty still remained in captivity, and there were also many who had been deported to the Andaman Islands. In expressing his satisfaction at what had been done, Gandhi admitted that there were difficulties in the way of freeing these others, but he expressed the hope that he could soon secure their release.

Gandhi had been warned by his doctors not to go to Calcutta and now that his work there was almost done he collapsed, and for a while it was not possible to move him back to Wardha. Tagore, himself just recovering from an illness that had seemed certain to prove fatal and still too weak to walk upstairs, had himself carried in a chair to the prayer meeting where he could sit near Gandhi for a while, but he would not attempt to disturb him by speaking. Gurudev (revered teacher) as Gandhi called him, was thinner now, and his face seemed smaller, wasted by disease. Perhaps as the two men looked at each other they knew that they would meet once again, perhaps twice, and then no more. Yet neither could be lost to the other for their souls were grappled together in a mutual understanding that Time was powerless to undo.

When it was possible to get Gandhi back to Wardha in the middle of November his health did not improve and in December his doctors determined at short notice to move him again, this time to Juhu, where he had spent his convalescence in 1924. Gandhi was reluctant to leave Sāgaon, but he submitted to his doctor's decree. Juhu he found much changed in the thirteen years that had gone by since he was there before. The whole foreshore was dotted with bungalows belonging to the wealthier people of Bombay, but still there were the sands and the sea, the ceaseless movement of the water to remind him of his boyhood in Porbandar, and to send fresh life back into the tired and aged body.

But he would not stay for long at Juhu. He must be back in Sāgaon, and since his heart and soul were there perhaps, in the long run, it would be best for his body to be there also. He was still very ill, and the blood pressure was dangerously erratic.



He could spare only one hour a day to talk to visitors, and even that told heavily on his strength. Still he would not turn away those who made a long pilgrimage to his village, and one who came at the end of January 1938 was Lord Lothian. Unlike many visitors he was chiefly interested in the activities of the Village Industries Association. "Most of us understand the non-violent aspect of your movement," he said to Gandhi, "What we do not understand is the simplicity. I should not have done so myself if I had not seen these things with my own eyes. Simplicity is apparently the corollary of non-violence."

At the end of February Gandhi went to the village of Hari-pura where the Congress was in session, and despite the devoted care of Desai and the others, dust-storms and the strain of work further undermined his health. Once more he rallied when he was back in Segaoon, and now he was calmly using his illness as an opportunity to make further experiments, deliberately trying out new modes of treatment and dietary rules of his own devising. In March he went to Calcutta again to engage in further discussions with the remaining political prisoners and to plead for their release. It was an almost suicidal thing to do and Gandhi was forced to admit that he was now fighting against severe limitations. "The fact must be faced that old age is now visibly creeping in, that even if I were to take undisturbed and inactive rest for several months, I cannot get back the capacity to work as of old, when I did not have to think how much I was working, when I got to bed, and at what hour of the night I was awake." Still his work in Calcutta gave him "a ray of hope bright enough to light my path to Wardha".

He returned by way of Delang in Orissa where he was to preside at an annual meeting of the *Gandhi Seva Sangh*, but now darkness closed down upon him, the ray of light was lost in the encircling gloom. "I am not likely to live long," he had told one of the prisoners in Calcutta, "may be I may live a year or a little more." But now he found the feeling of death spreading not over his body but through his very soul. He was almost prostrated with grief over the carelessness of his wife and Desai's wife, who had entered a temple from which Harijans were barred, a fault for which he blamed the unfortunate Mahadev. He seemed to be crushed under some oppressive weight, he

spoke of lost confidence and despondency. "I am going through a process of self-introspection," he wrote, "the results of which I cannot foresee. I find myself for the first time during the past 50 years in a slough of despond."

Perhaps Miraben's intuition came nearest to understanding the nature of the crisis through which he was passing, when she wrote in a letter: "I believe more and more that the nearer we can approach to Bapu's ideals, the further we can prolong his life. I used to feel it vaguely with a sort of half-vision, but now it stands out like a literal truth. We can kill him with our moral faults, or serve him into a ripe old age by awakening to his word. God help us."

Gandhi was compelled to abandon the first part of a tour in the North-West Frontier Province which he had so long looked forward to. Desai was sent on ahead, and Gandhi joined him for a few days. On the way back they again rested for a few days at Juhu. "The sweetly soothing, even intoxicating, Juhu breezes, blowing all night and day, have refreshed Gandhiji," Desai observed. "The spiritual cloud seems to be lifting." He was determined to go to the Frontier again in October and to spend several weeks there, and meanwhile he stayed in Segaon observing long periods of silence whenever possible.

In September came the Munich crisis, and with crisis Gandhi's way became clear before him. Something of his old physical endurance returned, and with it a redoubled vitality of the spirit. Munich he termed a 'Peace without honour', and from the Frontier Province he wrote two courageous and outspoken articles on the position of the Czechs. The first caused something of a sensation, for hitherto Gandhi had scarcely ever looked beyond the Indian horizon, not because of a narrow nationalism, but because he felt he had no message to deliver to the world until he had demonstrated the power of non-violence in India; that indeed was his way of speaking to the world. He had been stirred to make a general statement to the American Press at the time of the Italian assault on Abyssinia, and he had more than once spoken to visitors about the Sino-Japanese war. But nothing had been said to compare with the direct appeal to the Czechs to defend their land by corporate non-violence.

"My critics," he wrote in the second article, "might have

well asked why I had gone out of my self-prescribed orbit to speak to a Western nation when I could not show cent per cent success of non-violence on the Indian soil more especially now, when I had begun to entertain serious doubts as to whether Congressmen were really living up to their creed or policy of non-violence. Indeed, I had in mind the limitation and the present state of uncertainty about the Congress position. But my own faith in the non-violent remedy was as bright as ever when I wrote that article. And I felt that in the supreme hour of its trial it would be cowardly on my part not to suggest to the Czechs the non-violent remedy for acceptance. What may ultimately prove impossible of acceptance by crores of people, undisciplined and unused till but recently to corporate suffering, might be possible for a small, compact, disciplined nation inured to corporate suffering. I had no right to arrogate to myself any belief that India alone and no other nation was fit for non-violent action."

He ended with a grave warning. "One thing is certain. If the mad race for armaments continues, it is bound to result in a slaughter such as has never occurred in history. If there is a victor left the very victory will be a living death for the nation that emerges victorious. There is no escape from the impending doom save through a bold and unconditional acceptance of the non-violent method with all its glorious implication. Democracy and violence can ill go together. The states that are to-day nominally democratic have either to become frankly totalitarian, or, if they are to become truly democratic, they must become courageously non-violent. It is a blasphemy to say that non-violence can only be practised by individuals and never by nations which are composed of individuals."

In the Frontier Province his tour with Ghaffar Khan impressed him profoundly. The Frontier Gandhi had undoubtedly influenced the Khudai Khidmatgars to accept non-violence, their magnificent martial virtues were now displayed in enduring suffering bravely and not inflicting it upon others. Fiery words still came sometimes to their lips, and warlike thoughts rose often to the surface; but the discipline was holding and the constructive work in the villages would have its effect. The Khudai Khidmatgars would pacify the Frontier as the British with their bombing planes had not and could not. Here,

in the making, was the non-violent army of his vision, the Peace Brigade that might some day stand between warring factions to suffer death rather than stand by while violence swept over the land and community warred with community. Here were the Moslems who stood not for communalism like Mr. Jinnah, not for irresponsible wealth like the Aga Khan, who had so ironically been at the head of the list of representatives of British India at the Third Round Table Conference, but for the unity of India, and through a non-violent India for the unity of all mankind.

At the end of his tour he came to Taxila with its impressive ruins and relics of the days when Buddhism with its message of harmlessness to all living things had spread out from India to China, to Asia, to the world beyond the Himalayas which lay like a turban upon the forehead of India. The message of Gautama, too, had had to be delivered to the world before India had learned it. . . .

The time had come when he must speak to the world. He understood now why he could not restrain himself from speaking to the Czechs, and he knew that he must speak also to the Great Powers who were the oppressors, not only to the small nations in their extremity. The dark cloud was gone now, the suffocating menace that had enshrouded him had taken recognisable form and the next step was plain. They would not understand, perhaps. They would not heed him, that was certain. What of it? Had they heeded Socrates, 'the perfect Satyagrahi', as he had often called him? Had they heeded Jesus or Gautama? He was less than these, truly, but his duty was not different. In every age the way must be declared before all men.

Perhaps for a moment the cloud loomed large again as his mind beheld the marching armies, the mighty engines of destruction, the weapons by which men killed, maimed and destroyed from vast heights and distances. Had there ever been a moment in the history of mankind when the forces of evil strode so menacingly across the earth, lurked darkly beneath the waves and flew on their diabolic mission above the clouds, mocking the silence of Heaven, spreading death without discrimination as the sky shed its lifegiving rain? Yet there were the words of the *Gita* which he had spoken so often in the

prayers at dawn and at night-fall, in the prison cell, and in a swift-moving motor-car. "Wheresoever there is misery and ignorance, I come." He bowed his head in a terror of humility. He knew himself to be the instrument.

One of the first things he did when he had hastened back to Segaoon where an outbreak of illness had stricken more than half his workers was to write about the plight of the Jews in Europe, 'the untouchables of Christianity'.

He drew a parallel between their plight and that of the Indian community during his days in South Africa. "But the German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history. The tyrants of old never went so mad as Hitler seems to have gone.... If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified. But I do not believe in any war....

"If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German may, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon: I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. And for doing this, I should not wait for the fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance but would have confidence that in the end the rest are bound to follow my example. If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now. And suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy which no number of resolutions of sympathy passed in the world outside Germany can. Indeed even if Britain, France and America were to declare hostilities against Germany, they can bring no inner joy, no inner strength. The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in a general massacre of the Jews by way of his first answer to the declaration of such hostilities. ..

".... It is easier for the Jews than for the Czechs to follow my prescription.... The Jews are a compact, homogenous community in Germany. They are far more gifted than the Indians in South Africa. And they have organised world opinion behind them. I am convinced that if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling

of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has today become a degrading man-hunt can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women possessing the strength of suffering given to them by Jehovah. It will be then a truly religious resistance offered against the godless fury of dehumanized man. The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an appreciation of human dignity. They will have rendered service to fellow-Germans and proved their title to be the real Germans as against those who are today dragging, however unknowingly, the German name into the mire."

There was an outburst of anger in Germany at this, which did not deter Gandhi from following up his article with several more comments of the same kind.

In December there came another opportunity of considerable importance. The International Missionary Conference had met at Tambaram near Madras, and several of the delegates had come especially to Segaoon to examine Gandhi's views.

He repeated to them what he had already written about the Jews and the Czechs, and spoke also of China.

"The Chinese have no designs upon other people. They have no desire for territory. True, perhaps, China is not ready for such aggression: perhaps what looks like her pacifism is only indolence. In any case China's is not active non-violence. Her putting up a valiant defence against Japan is proof enough that China was never intentionally non-violent. That she is on the defensive is no answer in terms of non-violence. Therefore when the time for testing her active non-violence came, she failed in the test. This is no criticism of China. I wish the Chinese success. According to the accepted standards her behaviour is strictly correct. But when the position is examined in terms of non-violence, I must say it is unbecoming for a nation of 400 millions, a nation as cultured as Japan, to repel Japanese aggression by resorting to Japan's own methods. If the Chinese had non-violence of my conception, there would be no use left for the latest machinery for destruction which Japan possesses. The Chinese would say to Japan, 'Bring all your machinery, we present half of our population to you. But the remaining two hundred millions won't bend their knee

to you.' If the Chinese did that Japan would become China's slave." And he went on to quote Shelley's lines from 'The Mosque of Anarchy'—"Ye are many, they are few."

Of course they told him that he did not know Hitler and Mussolini. The dictators were incapable of any kind of moral response, said the missionaries, they had no conscience.

"Your argument," Gandhi answered, "presupposes that the dictators like Mussolini or Hitler are beyond redemption. But belief in non-violence is based on the assumption that human nature in its essence is one, and therefore unfailingly responds to the advances of love. It should be remembered that they have up to now always found ready response to the violence that they have used. Within their experience, they have not come across organised non-violent resistance on an appreciable scale, if at all. "Therefore," he concluded, scandalizing his visitors, "it is not only highly likely, but I hold it to be inevitable, that they would recognise the superiority of non-violent resistance over any display of violence that they may be capable of putting forth."

But even if it were conceded that dictators were human, and the missionaries still had their doubts about that, there remained the long-range gun and the bombing aeroplane. From twenty thousand feet it did not matter if you were shaking your fist or turning the other cheek. Down would come the bombs, just the same. Non-violence could not apply where there was no personal contact.

"The reply," said Gandhi, "is that behind the death-dealing bomb there is the human hand that releases it, and behind that still is the human heart that sets the hand in motion. At the back of the policy of terrorism is the assumption that terrorism, if applied in a sufficient measure, will produce the desired result, namely, bend the adversary to the tyrant's will. But supposing a people make up their mind that they will never do the tyrant's will, nor retaliate with the tyrant's own methods, the tyrant will not find it worth while to go on with his terrorism. If sufficient food is given to the tyrant, the time will come when he will have had more than a surfeit."

"What can I do," asked one of the visitors, "as a Christian to contribute to international peace?" And the Hindu answered him: "You as a Christian can make an effective contri-

bution by non-violent action even though it may cost you your all. Peace will never come until the Great Powers courageously decide to disarm themselves. It seems to me that recent events must force that belief upon the Great Powers. I have an implicit faith—a faith that today burns brighter than ever, after half a century's experience of unbroken practice of non-violence that mankind can only be saved through non-violence which is the central teaching of the Bible, as I have understood the Bible."

Christmas brought another visitor, Sir S. Radhakrishnan, on his way to England to occupy the Chair of Oriental Philosophy at Oxford University. "Hitherto they were sending missionaries to India," he remarked to Gandhi, "now that the Oxford University has introduced a Chair of Oriental Philosophy, I felt that it would be some use to be there." Before he left he had one more thing to say to the Mahatma. "The living evidence on the basis of which I can teach oriental philosophy is you," and he quoted two or three passages from the classics. "I am sometimes asked," he reflected, "as to what would India do in the event of a world war. I tell them, we have witnessed the extinction of many a civilisation that rested on force. We shall adhere to non-violence. Others perished because of the violence. What does it matter, then, if we perish in the attempt to apply the principle of non-violence? We shall have lived and died for a great principle."



## CHAPTER XI

### INDIA REBELS—THE THIRD STRUGGLE FOR SELF-RULE

FOR some time a stirring of life had been evident in the Indian States, and on many sides there was a demand for responsible government which would eventually relegate the Princes to the position of constitutional monarchs. Theoretically the struggle was not with the British Power but with the Princes, although the Princes were widely regarded as "British officers in Indian dress", as Gandhi had described them to Brailsford in London. But, even in theory, Britain was the Paramount Power, able to intervene in State affairs and overthrow any Prince with whose policy Britain deeply disagreed, and in most States influential British Residents kept a close watch on policy.

The part of the 1935 Government of India Act which envisaged an effective federation of the 'British' Provinces and the 'Native' States had been strongly criticised on both sides. At least, the Nationalists resolved that such a partnership must not be taken to imply that the Indian people in the Native States should never be in a position to make a constitutional demand for responsible government on a democratic pattern. More and more the Congress supporters tended to encourage aspirations towards popular control of States' government, although Congress had for long held back its supporters and laid strict limits on the lengths to which intervention in the States might go.

But had not Jawaharlal said in his open letter to Gandhi at Poona that the vested interests in India must go, and that the Princes were the second biggest vested interest? And had not Gandhi himself acquiesced to the extent of saying that the Princes would have to part with much of their power and become popular representatives of the people over whom they ruled?

Now at the end of January 1939, Gandhi, reviewing the situation in *Harijan*, spoke of the movement for liberty within the States as entering a new stage. In several quarters open

struggle had broken out. Repression was being applied so fiercely in Talcher and Dhenkanal that 26,000 people out of a population of 75,000 in Talcher had fled to British Orissa for sanctuary. Jaipur was endeavouring to destroy the popular movement and had refused to permit the entry into the State of Gandhi's close friend, the wealthy philanthropist Jamnalal Bajaj, who had made possible Gandhi's work at Segaon, and with whom he had lived as a neighbour for some time. In Rajkot a fierce campaign led by Vallabhbhai Patel had ended in a sweeping victory. Patel had signed a pact with the Thakore Sahib and then the Ruler had broken his promise, precipitating a renewal of the struggle. Travancore was seething with discontent.

About this time there was a meeting of the Chamber of Princes at Bombay. They were particularly disturbed by events in Rajkot and lost no time in proposing a common Police Force for a group of States, which it was claimed was "the indication of the Paramount Power and its representatives". The Praja Mandals (Peoples' Assemblies), organisations within the States on lines similar to the Congress in British India, were to be crushed out of existence. Intolerable grievances might have to be redressed, but agitators from outside should be dealt with severely and deported, political activities among the States' people should not be encouraged and agitators who could not be otherwise disposed of should be given suitable State employment, as the most effective way of silencing them. It was an exposition of the policy of divide and rule that could scarcely have been bettered, given - if the report is correct - with a most extraordinary candour, and no apparent realisation that there was anything questionable about such a policy.

Gandhi had been to Bardoli once more while this crisis developed, and he had had the satisfaction of telling the people there that one more long battle had been won. "We declared times without number that the confiscated lands would some day or other be restored to their owners. They have been restored." But he said too. "Do not for a moment think that because the lands have come back to us Swaraj has been won. I warn you not to delude yourselves for a moment and not to go back to your pleasures and follies. A higher ordeal has yet to come."

From Bardoli he went back to Segaoon, intending to go from there to Tripuri for the Congress session, which was a critical one. Subhas Bose had been re-elected as President over Gandhi's candidate Dr. Sitaramayya, and Gandhi had deep reason for perturbation at the event. His presence was essential, and yet his health seemed to rule out the possibility of his making the journey.

Pyarelal had for the time taken the place of the omnipresent Mahadev Desai. Desai had been seriously ill and then was absent in the Frontier Province. Pyarelal was as quick to grasp the position as Mahadev would have been and he wrote in the second week of February:

"Ever since our return from Bardoli in the beginning of February, Gandhiji has been keeping indifferent health. The heart has been affected as a result of continued high blood pressure, coupled with the strain of unavoidable overwork. The doctors took a grave view of the swelling on the feet that had manifested itself on the eve of our departure from Bardoli. They ordered him absolute rest from physical and mental work. All journeying was forbidden and even the usual morning and evening walks were interdicted.

"Gandhiji has been trying punctiliously to carry out the instructions of the doctors and has largely been successful so far as the physical part is concerned. He has even written to Subhas Babu to excuse him from attendance at Tripuri 'mainly on grounds of health'.

"The happenings of Rajkot, Jaipur and some of the States of Orissa have been weighing heavily upon his sensitive mind. He is by nature long-suffering. His patience at times seems inexhaustible. But when a gross, open, palpable falsehood is sought to be imposed upon him by insolent might, his entire moral being rises in revolt against it, and he blazes forth. Rajkot is straining his endurance almost to the breaking point, but he refuses to say 'die'."

On February 3, Kasturba Gandhi had entered Rajkot to court arrest. She was a daughter of that State and had claimed the right to go to the aid of the people. Gandhi had protested that she was too weak, for she had but recently fainted while in Delhi and might have died but for the presence of mind

of Devadas, one of her sons. She would not be deterred by anything he said, or by the expostulations of Vallabhbhai Patel. So she became a 'State guest'.

The detention of Mrs. Gandhi produced a fresh clash and numerous arrests. There were charges of terrorism against the State Police and authorities, and counter-charges of fabrication by the State. There was an exchange of telegrams which did nothing to show the situation in a more hopeful light. On February 25, Gandhi wired that he was "leaving for Rajkot to-day". He advised Vallabhbhai Patel to suspend civil resistance while he made his bid for peace. He had refused to allow Pyarelal to publish the note about his health and few realised in what peril he put his life in undertaking the mission. But the moral issues involved in the Rajkot struggle were crucial and the situation had so far deteriorated that a fresh attempt to break the deadlock was imperative.

His visits to the prisoners in jail confirmed his belief that the repressive measures of the State had been severe and indefensible. His conversations with the Thakore Sahib, with his serpentine Minister, Virawala, and with the harassed British Resident began well and ended badly. Gandhi explored all the roads to a possible compromise, insisting only that the agreement with Patel should be honoured in principle, so that he and his popular party would have the right to choose a majority of the committee which was to recommend reforms in the constitution.

On March 3, it became known that he had resolved to fast to death unless the pledge was honoured. The fast was to begin at noon and the reply from the Thakore Sahib did not come until a few minutes later. The pressmen who had gathered held their breath as he looked through the letter. "It only adds fuel to the fire," he said quietly. The fast had begun.

He had passed half the preceding night in a wakeful agony which had been resolved only by the decision to fast. Now that he had thrown his life into the scales, peace had come back to him, and Pyarelal wrote in wonder that "Gandhiji passed into his haven of unperturbed calm and slept peacefully and long in the afternoon as he had not since his arrival in Rajkot".

The decision that brought him peace shattered the composure of his friends. Andrews, at Shantiniketan, the home of Tagore,

had the task of conveying the news to the aged poet, who was deeply moved. Andrews did not waste another moment but sent a wire to Gandhi, en route to Delhi, from whence he intended to hurry to Rajkot. At Delhi there were two wires from Gandhi. The first read, "All well. Anxiety complex not allowed. Love"; and the second, "Your coming unnecessary at present. Keeping well. Love. Tell Mahadev, others".

But the doctors who had rushed to Rajkot were by no means disposed to think that all was well. On the first morning of the fast there was a definite weakening of the first heart sound, which at that juncture was an alarming symptom. Poor Kasturba, interned and unable to come to her husband, had sent him a pathetic note and he had answered sternly: "You are worrying for nothing. You ought to rejoice that God has sent me an opportunity to do His will." But to Agatha Harrison, who had arrived that day, he said, "I am sick of fasting". He added soon after, "I have a vague feeling that there is one more fast in store for me. But I dread the very idea of it when I think of the nausea and restlessness that have characterised my fasts of late."

If there was another fast in store, then he expected to survive, he had some hope? "What is your view of the situation?" Agatha Harrison asked, and her heart sank as he answered, "We are up against a stone wall".

On 5th March Kasturba was brought to the house to see him. Gandhi asked if the other women who had been interned were free also, and on learning that they were not, he sent his wife back to confinement. She endorsed his judgment that she should not accept special treatment. But she had seen that her husband was losing strength, restlessness and nausea were increasing, and on the night of 5th March he began to find difficulty in swallowing even water on account of the nausea. His condition had markedly deteriorated in the last twenty-four hours and the night of March 6 was a long ordeal of nausea and retching. In the morning Pyarelal noted with horror that his face "presented a shrivelled-up appearance owing to the growing inability to drink water".

But now the end came quickly. There had been an exchange of messages between Gandhi and the Viceroy, and the Viceroy now offered the services of the Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice

Gwyer. As a distinguished jurist Sir Maurice was ready to arbitrate on the undertaking given by the Thakore Sahib to Patel in December. Gandhi was thus enabled to break his fast on 7th March, after a little more than four days.

The award was announced on April 3, and it completely vindicated the interpretation by Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel. "In my opinion," wrote the Chief Justice, "the true construction of each document is that the Thakore Sahib undertakes to appoint the persons whom Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel may recommend, and that he does not reserve to himself any discretion to reject those whom he does not approve. He is no doubt entitled to criticise the recommendations, and to urge reasons for reconsidering them; but, unless it can be shown that any of the persons recommended are neither subjects nor servants of the State, Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel is to have the last word."

A fortnight later Gandhi was explaining in *Harijan* why the issue had seemed to him so crucial. "Geographically Rajkot is a tiny spot on the map of India, but the disturbance which I felt called upon to deal with was symptomatic of a universal malady. My endeavour in Rajkot was meant to nip the evil in the bud. I am of opinion that the result of the endeavour has so far benefited the whole of India."

He explained also his reasons for appealing to the Viceroy. "I have no sense of shame about going to H.E. the Viceroy. I had invited him as the Crown Representative to perform his duty by intervening to enforce performance of a promise by a tributary of the Crown. I had not gone as a petitioner depending upon his mercy."

But the struggle was not yet over. Negotiations before the fast had centred round the composition of the reform committee. Originally it was to consist of ten persons seven to be recommended by Patel and three State officials by the Thakore Sahib. The latter's strategy was to plead the imperative necessity in common justice of including three representatives of the Moslems and *Bhayats* of his own choosing which would in fact have given him a majority of six to four. Gandhi had done his best to meet the valid part of the proposal. He had with difficulty persuaded the popular party to be content with a bare majority of one. He had suggested that the three officials and the three minority representatives should sit with the seven popular nominees in a

total committee of thirteen, or that, to confine the committee to ten members, the officials should be present only in an advisory capacity.

The Ruler refused either to enlarge the number of the Committee beyond ten or to give the three officials only advisory powers, so that Gandhi was obliged to insist on not less than six popular representatives in order to retain the majority, and thus the minority representatives could not find a place.

This, as had been anticipated, provoked disorders among the minorities, and on the evening of 16th April news came that there would be a hostile demonstration at Gandhi's public prayer meeting. He gave peremptory instructions that anybody approaching him, no matter with what intent, should be given free access and not obstructed in any way. About six hundred demonstrators appeared at the prayer ground bearing black flags and placards, shouting slogans and reproaches. Gandhi bowed to them before he sat down to prayer, but the noise did not cease. "Their cries pierced me like arrows whilst I was trying to concentrate my mind on the words of the prayer," he wrote later. "I have not attained the power of meditation which makes one impervious to all disturbances from without. They knew that if they had invited me to attend their meeting in order to witness their hostile demonstrations and their wrath, weak as I have been, I would have gone there and tried to appease them . . . I fear the demonstrators have not served their cause by their unwarranted interference with the prayer of innocent men and women."

The prayer over, he rose to go, but the demonstrators were now pouring in through the entrance of the narrow passage leading to the prayer ground. Gandhi decided, instead of leaving by car, to walk through the crowd so as to give the demonstrators full chance to say or do to him whatever they pleased.

He paused where the crush was too great to allow further progress, sternly refusing to listen to friends who wanted to form a protective cordon. "I shall sit here or go alone in their midst," he declared. But as he stood there he was suddenly seized by an indescribable pain in the region of the waist and felt as though he must faint. It was an old symptom which seized him when he received a deep mental shock, and the strain of the fast and the ensuing struggle had weakened his resistance. For a time he

stood in the midst of the jostling crowd motionless and silent, his eyes shut, supporting himself on his staff, and seeking relief through silent prayer. In a few minutes he had mastered himself again and he repeated his resolve to go through the demonstrators, alone, but for a *Bhayat* who stood immediately in front of him. "I will go under your sole protection," he said, "not my co-workers." Some of the demonstrators had by now realised his condition and shouted for a way to be made clear. Leaning on the shoulder of the *Bhayat*, Gandhi walked through the crowd to his waiting car. As the car drove off he said, "This is the way of Satyagraha, to put your head unresistingly in the lap of your 'enemy', for him to keep or make short work of you just as he pleases. It is the sovereign way, and throughout my half century of varied experience it has never once failed me."

But this was the least bitter of the experiences Gandhi faced on his return to Rajkot after the announcement of the Award. The Thakore Sahib was not at all tractable, the shifty Virawala could find endless obstacles, and Gandhi began to realise that there had been a flaw in the course he had followed. Peace and progress in Rajkot could be obtained in one of two ways. Either the unwilling Ruler and his Minister could be compelled by British pressure to honour the undertaking given, which was unthinkable to the prophet of non-violence. Or, the Ruler and the Minister must be converted to the popular view and agree to the introduction of the reforms. The fast and the Award had not moved them. What more could Satyagraha do?

"All the time that I have been engaged in the Rajkot question this question has been forcing itself upon me," he said on the evening before his departure from the State at the end of April. "Why has our Ahimsa failed to gain recognition from the State authorities?" It was particularly bitter that this should be the case in Rajkot for Gandhi's father had served the State when the present Ruler's grandfather had been on the throne, and the Thakore Sahib's father had regarded Gandhi as his own father, his guru. Gandhi had looked upon Thakore Sahib as a son, and the revelation that the younger man was hopelessly in the power of his Minister had come as a bitter surprise. But, he continued, "The discovery I have made is this: No matter what concessions you succeed in getting from the State authorities, it is only to the extent that they are the result of a true heart



conversion on their part that you will be able to enjoy or digest them." He proposed that they should go to Virawala and tell him that they had relieved Gandhi of all responsibility in their cause, and that they would relieve the Paramount Power of their responsibility also, relying now entirely on their own capacity to induce him to implement the agreement of December. "Ahimsa is a science," he said in conclusion. "The word 'failure' has no place in the vocabulary of science. Failure to obtain the expected result is often the precursor to further discoveries. It is in that spirit that you should approach and pursue your present mission."

On 18th May he published a statement renouncing the Award, and confessing that in his fast there had been an element of coercion. Instead of asking for the intervention of the Paramount Power he should have addressed the fast to the Thakore Sahib, or the latter's adviser, and have been content to die if he could not have melted their hearts.

Two days later he attended by special invitation a Durbar in Rajkot. The Thakore Sahib announced the cancellation of all the previous notifications, promised the restoration of confiscated property and fines, and declared that henceforth all citizens of the State would enjoy all their civil rights and liberties within the bounds of the ordinary law. He announced the appointment of a committee of ten to report on constitutional reforms and some writers suggest that the resulting reforms marked a measure of progress. Gandhi, however, interpreted them as a backward rather than a forward step. Still he did not regret his intervention, and so far from believing that Satyagraha had suffered a set-back, he considered that the outcome demonstrated the unworthiness of the Satyagrahis to receive more than they had got. What they had got was a form of 'dyarchy'.

Elsewhere in the States there was more progress. Jammalal Bajaj had been twice expelled from Jaipur, and Gandhi had protested that they were making of him "a football to be kicked out of Jaipur every time he dares to exercise the right of entering his birthplace". On his third entry he was detained and a civil disobedience movement began in the State, ending with a settlement and the release of Bajaj.

In several other States power had been delegated to popular

representatives and Professor Coupland sums up the achievement as a 'partial success'. "The autocratic system," he writes, "had been pressed hard and in several States it had yielded ground." But if Congress leaders generally tended to be flushed with success and inclined to entertain larger ambitions, Gandhi now found it necessary, after his experience in Rajkot, to sound a note of warning. He was unlikely, he said, to recommend mass disobedience anywhere for a time. Individual action, fully disciplined and genuinely non-violent, would be more effective. Meanwhile reformers in the States should moderate their immediate demands, if necessary, in order to hasten the advance to the final goal.

Before the Rajkot struggle was concluded Gandhi had had to face an important crisis within the Congress. The re-election of Bose as President had been an ominous sign, for he seemed to be heading towards violent action and to be trying to swing the Congress in that direction, in defiance of its creed which limited it to "peaceful and legitimate" means. At the Tripuri Session Gandhi's supporters had emerged victorious from a struggle with the Bose group and this was followed by the resignation of thirteen members of the Working Committee, including Jawaharlal Nehru, who pointedly reaffirmed his wholehearted acceptance of non-violent principles in his letter of resignation. At the end of April Gandhi and Bose met, and after a long conference Bose resigned from the Presidency and announced the formation of a new Left bloc under his leadership.

At Tripuri the Congress had accepted a forthright resolution on foreign policy that left no room for doubt where they stood.

"The Congress records its entire disapproval of the British foreign policy culminating in the Munich Pact, the Anglo-Italian Agreement and the recognition of Rebel Spain. This policy has been one of deliberate betrayal of democracy, repeated breach of pledges, the ending of the system of collective security and co-operation with Governments which are avowed enemies of democracy and freedom. As the result of this policy the world is being reduced to a state of international anarchy, where brutal violence triumphs and flourishes unchecked and decides the fate of nations, and in the name of peace stupendous preparations are being made for the most terrible of wars. Inter-

national morality has sunk so low in Central and South-Western Europe that the world has witnessed with horror the organised terrorism of the Nazi Government against people of the Jewish race and continuous bombing from the air, by rebel forces of cities and their civilian inhabitants and of helpless refugees.

"The Congress dissociates itself entirely from the British foreign policy which has consistently aided Fascist Power and helped the destruction of democratic countries. The Congress is opposed to Imperialism and Fascism alike, and is convinced that world peace and progress require the ending of both of these. In the opinion of the Congress, it is urgently necessary for India to direct her own foreign policy as an independent nation, thereby keeping aloof from both Imperialism and Fascism and pursuing her path of peace and freedom."

In May the A.I.C.C., alarmed at extensive emergency measures, which placed the Provincial Governments once more entirely under the direction of the Central Government during a state of emergency, declared that Congress "cannot tolerate an amendment which strikes at the very basis of Provincial autonomy and renders it a farce in case of war, which in effect creates a war-dictatorship...."

But on 3rd September the Viceroy, without previously consulting any of the Indian leaders, proclaimed India at war. Two days later Gandhi went at Lord Linlithgow's invitation to see him. Gandhi had written in July to Hitler to appeal to him to prevent war, which Gandhi said it was in his power to do. There was no reply. At the end of August he had answered an appeal from M. Paderewski: "Of course my whole heart is with the Poles in the unequal struggle in which they are engaged for the sake of saving their freedom. But I am painfully conscious of the fact that my word carries no power to stop this mad destruction that is going on in Europe."

Now he told the Viceroy that "my own sympathies are with England and France from the purely humanitarian standpoint". Indeed, as he pictured the possible destruction of the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, he broke down. Later in September he wrote in *Harijan* that he had come to the conclusion that Hitler was responsible for the war, because he had refused to submit Germany's claims to an independent tribunal.

There was no doubt either about the attitude of Congress as a whole. The Working Committee condemned the Fascist aggression but held that the issue of peace and war must be decided by the Indian people, and that India's resources were not to be exploited for imperialist ends. They therefore asked for an unequivocal declaration of war aims by the British Government, and in particular, how these aims would be applied to India.

Lord Linlithgow now consulted more than fifty of India's leading public men, including Gandhi, but the emptiness of the gesture was seen in his declaration on October 17. The most he would say on the future of India was that "His Majesty's Government will, at the end of the war, be prepared to regard the scheme of the Act as open to modification in the light of Indian views". He offered immediately to set up a consultative group, which however would have no power. "The statement," Gandhi commented, "shows clearly that there is to be no democracy in India if Britain can prevent it."

The Congress reply was to call upon the Provincial Governments to resign. They had governed for more than two years "on the whole with great success", the Viceroy had declared. Now they showed how far the British statesmen had flouted Indian opinion in declaring India to be at war without consultation with her chosen leaders. The Viceroy had said that India was at war. The Congress in effect declared otherwise, pending a more satisfactory statement of Britain's intentions, and waxed satirical at the promptness with which the Princes, who had so strenuously denied democracy to their own people, now hastened to throw themselves (or rather their subjects), into the war for democracy. Congress would trust no vague suggestions about eventual Dominion Status. This time there must be no Rowlatt Acts and no Amritsar. Fight for freedom they would, but victory in the fight for their own freedom must precede help in the struggle for the freedom of others.

Early in 1940 C.F. Andrews died. He had done more than anyone to bring Gandhi's message to England. He had been an arbitrary editor of Gandhi's writings, and a magnificent friend to Gandhi and all that he stood for. The affection between the two men had never wavered since the day when they

met on the quayside at Durban in 1914. For Gandhi he had been a living proof of the good will of the English towards India, and with his going the scene was dark and empty. Perhaps it seemed to Gandhi as though the wave of violence that had broken over the Western world had for a time blotted out that good will which the common people of England felt for India, when they felt about India at all. With that submerging of the will to understand, Andrews with his unfailing love was no longer the symbol of his race.

When the Congress met at Ramgarh, Gandhi paid a moving tribute to his old friend:

"I want Englishmen and Indians, whilst the memory of this servant of England and India is still fresh, to give a thought to the legacy he has left for us both. There is no doubt about his love for England being equal to that of the greatest of Englishmen, nor can there be any doubt of his love for India being equal to that of the greatest of Indians . . . . At the present moment I do not wish to think of English misdeeds. They will be forgotten, but not one of the heroic deeds of Andrews will be forgotten so long as India and England live. If we really love Andrews' memory we may not have hate in us for Englishmen, of whom Andrews was among the best and noblest." And he told them how Charlie Andrews had said, on the bed from which he was never to rise, "Mohan, Swaraj is coming".

Gandhi had stern words to say at Ramgarh about the future policy of Congress. Civil Disobedience had been proposed and he made clear his own mind about it. "There was a time in my life," he said, "when I launched movements even if some of my conditions had not been fulfilled. I am now going to be hard, not for the sake of being hard, but because a general who has to lead an army must let the army know his conditions beforehand. Let me tell you that I do not see at the present moment conditions propitious for an immediate launching of the campaign."

Of the external difficulties he made light: "A Satyagrahi . . flourishes on external difficulties and faces them with redoubled zeal and vigour." But internal weaknesses were of decisive importance. While Congress had been struggling in the wilderness it had been relatively pure. With the winning of power

two years before, selfish, greedy elements began to take an interest. "Our Congress registers," said Gandhi, "are full of bogus members, and members who have swelled them because they know that getting into Congress means getting into power. Those who therefore never before thought of entering the Congress have come into it and corrupted it. And how can we prevent people from coming into a democratic organisation because they come from selfish motives? We have not that discipline and not the strength and purity of public opinion which would compel such people to stay out."

When he spoke of the stern discipline he would impose to remedy such impurities, he showed how absurd are the attempts to label him as an advocate of totalitarianism, as a 'dictator'. "True," he said, "I want to repeat what I have said times without number, that if you will be soldiers in my army, understand that there is no room for democracy in that organisation." But he went on to say: "The army may be a part of a democratic organisation, but there can be no democracy in it. . . . I am supposed to be your general but I do not know a more feeble general in history. My only sanction is the love and affection in which you hold me." He reaffirmed the need for a high standard of self-discipline.

Gandhi's army was not only a non-violent army, it was also a volunteer army. Anyone may resign at any moment without loss or penalty. Moreover, although in the non-violent army the volunteers are no more expected to plan strategy by majority vote than are soldiers in a military force, volunteers are expected to test all instructions by their own conscience. Gandhi was perhaps unique in warning his followers, as he had done many years before, that "our last state will be worse than our first if we surrender our reason into somebody's keeping. And I would feel extremely sorry to discover that the country had unthinkingly and blindly followed all I had said or done. I am quite conscious of the fact that blind surrender to love is often more mischievous than a forced surrender to the lash of the new tyrant. There is hope for the slave of the brute, none for that of love."

Within a few weeks of Ramgarh the Working Committee had rejected Gandhi's leadership. The military disasters in Europe in the spring had made the fall of Britain seem imminent.

There were some who thought that this was the moment to press for recognition of India's independence and to these Gandhi answered decisively, "We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin." Others foresaw a possible invasion of India or serious internal disturbances and wished to be free to use military force in such circumstances. Gandhi, on the contrary, wanted Congress at this critical hour to declare unwillingness that India should maintain armed forces to defend her freedom against external aggression or internal disorder. The Working Committee were "unable to go the full length with Gandhiji; but they recognise that he should be free to pursue his great ideal in his own way and therefore absolve him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue".

The Congress President, Azad, declared that Congress would support the war if a provisional National Government were set up, with suitable powers, and Rajagopalachari concurred. Jawaharlal was apparently of the opinion that if any concession was made it would come from the dire necessity of Britain alone, and not from any change of heart. Consequently he would do no more than demand independence "for our defence and the defence of freedom", and was probably thinking primarily of aid for China and Russia, in the event of the latter becoming involved.

Britain did indeed make a bid for the support of the principal Indian parties but it was a weak one. The Viceroy made a statement which became known as the 'August offer'. The furthest advance was on the question of responsibility for framing the future constitution. At the beginning of the war Britain would only regard the 1935 Act as "open to modification in the light of Indian views". Now the British Government concurred in the Indian desire that the framing of the new constitution should be "primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves".

The possible value of the declaration was defeated by the clause which read: "It goes without saying that they could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life." This not only meant that such a mino-

riety as the Princes could hold India to ransom for any terms, but that the 'communal' Moslems could do the same.

Mr. Jinnah had, since the outbreak of war, come to occupy a powerful position in Indian politics. Less than thirty years before he had made a speech in English at one of the receptions given to Gandhi on the latter's arrival in India after the success in South Africa. Gandhi had regretted that the speech was not in an Indian language. The incident had been prophetic. Gandhi had become more and more the embodiment of India. Jinnah had become more and more a Europeanized politician, wealthy, shrewd, and exacting. He had for long been a member of the Congress, an apostle of Hindu-Moslem unity. But after the collapse of the Khilafat struggle and the communal riots of the 'twenties he had become identified with the 'communal' Moslems. His claims had risen steadily. Moslems must have separate electorates and a guaranteed number of seats in the Legislatures. Moslems must have not merely proportional representation but equal representation. They were one nation in India. The Hindus were another. The Moslems must be an equal partner in the Indian Federation. They had not been slow to see the possibility of emulating the undemocratic Princes whose autocratic privileges had in effect been recognised and buttressed by the federal part of the 1935 Act. Now, since the outbreak of war, the former apostle of Hindu-Moslem unity had persuaded the Moslem League to adopt the Pakistan scheme, demanding the partition of India, the Moslems to govern all Provinces where Moslems were in a majority. Such an extremist point of view would have been intolerable only a few years before. But India had been startled by the sweeping victories of Congress in the provincial elections and although many Moslem Congressmen had been put into office, the extremist Moslems were quick to pick up every local incident that could be used to inflame suspicion and exacerbate feeling against the Hindus.

The August offer was, therefore, certain to lead to the partition of India, and that was flatly intolerable to Congress and to most other sections of Indian opinion. The Working Committee described the offer as "a direct encouragement and incitement to civil disorder and strife....The issue of the mi-



norities has been made into an insuperable barrier to India's progress."

Mr. Amery had said in the House of Commons that no veto had been conceded. What was meant was that it was desirable for the majority to compromise and for the minorities to accept the compromise if it was reasonable. But that was not what the August Offer said. It was only Mr. Amery's pious hope as to what the minorities would want to make it mean.

The Moslem League reiterated that partition was the only solution and meanwhile agreed to co-operate in the war if they were assured not proportional representation but equal representation in the existing Councils.

The intense disappointment over the August Offer led the All-India Congress Committee to recall Gandhi to the leadership. He was prepared to lead a non-violent struggle for India's freedom, although he knew that India might be ready to defend her freedom by violence if necessary. Until India was free she could not make her choice. When she was free he would appeal to those who shared his beliefs to defend India by the way of Satyagraha. The other leaders could appeal for an army, a navy and an air force. Perhaps they would be surprised to find how deeply non-violence had influenced the Indian people in twenty-five years.

Gandhi's two over-riding principles, then, were the refusal to bargain for India's freedom by the offer of support in the war and desire not to embarrass Britain unnecessarily in her struggle. Nevertheless India must be free to speak her mind. "The Congress claims for itself," he said to his Committee, "the freedom to protect civil liberty in this country, but must have the right to state freely what we feel about the war. . . . I claim the liberty of going through the streets of Bombay and saying that I shall have nothing to do with this war, because I do not believe in war, in the fratricide that is going on in Europe."

The Viceroy protested that this would not be allowed even in the United Kingdom. Conscientious objectors, he said, might be absolved from the duty of fighting and allowed to profess their faith, but they were most emphatically not permitted to "carry opposition to the length of endeavouring to persuade others, whether soldiers or munition workers, to abandon their

allegiance or to discontinue their effort". What Gandhi proposed was surely calculated to embarrass the Government of India, which Gandhi had said he wanted, if possible, to avoid.

Gandhi was not impressed by this attempt to use English pacifism as a stick to beat him with. He wanted to refrain from embarrassing the British Government, but had never intended to carry non-embarrassment to the point of self-extinction. He could not deny his creed. "If the Congress has to die, it should do so in the act of proclaiming its faith." In a public statement in September he said: "Freedom to propagate non-violence as a substitute for war was most vital when indecent savagery was being perpetrated by the warring nations."

In July he had addressed a direct appeal to Britain. "I do not want Britain to be defeated, nor do I want her to be victorious in the trial of brute strength. . . . I appeal for the cessation of hostilities, not because you are too exhausted to fight, but because war is bad in essence. . . . No cause, however just, can warrant indiscriminate slaughter going on minute by minute." He went on to describe the alternative to war:

"This process and method which I have called non-violent non-co-operation is not without considerable success in its use in India. Your representatives in India may deny the claim. If they do, I shall feel sorry for them. They may tell you that our non-co-operation was not wholly non-violent, that it is born of hatred. If they give that testimony I will not deny it.

"Had it been wholly non-violent, if all non-co-operators had been filled with goodwill to you, I would make bold to say that you who are India's masters would have become her pupils, and, with much greater skill than we, have perfected this matchless weapon and met the menace of the German and Italian friends with it.

"Indeed, the history of Europe during the past few months would then have been written differently. Europe would have been spared seas of innocent blood, the rape of so many small nations, and an orgy of hatred.

"This is no appeal made by a man who does not know his business. I have been practising, with scientific precision, non-violence and its possibilities for an unbroken period of over fifty years. I have applied it in every walk of life—domestic, institutional, economic, and political. I know no single case

in which it has failed. Where it seemed sometimes to have failed I have ascribed it to my imperfections.

"I claim no perfection for myself. But I do claim to be a passionate seeker of truth, which is but another name for God. In the course of that search the discovery to non-violence came to me. It has spread over my life mission. I have no interest except for the prosecution of that mission.

"I claim to have been the life-long and wholly disinterested friend of the British people. At one time I used to be also the lover of your empire. I thought it was doing good to India. When I saw that in the nature of things it could do no good, I used, and am still using, the non-violent method to fight imperialism. Whatever is the ultimate fate of my country my love for you remains and will remain undiminished.

"My non-violence demands universal love and you are no small part of it. It is that love which prompted me to appeal to you. May God give power to every word of mine. In his name I began to write this and in His name I close it. May your statesmen have wisdom and courage to respond to my appeal."

In October, Gandhi launched his campaign. It was not to be a campaign of mass disobedience, for that would have been a major embarrassment to the Government. Instead it was to be limited to individuals whom he nominated. The first was Vinoba Bhave, one of the earliest members of his ashram. In the latter half of October, Vinoba made several anti-war speeches in villages near Wardha. He was arrested and sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Jawaharlal Nehru then visited Gandhi and it was decided that he would offer individual satyagraha in Allahabad early in November. But on October 31 on his way there from Wardha, the authorities acted first and arrested him on the evidence of three speeches he had made at the beginning of the month in Gorakhpur, unconnected with the campaign. Early in November, another Satyagrahi, Brahmo Dutt, began shouting the recognised slogan in the neighbourhood of Wardha. "It is wrong to help the British war effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance." Dutt was sent to jail for six months.

In mid-November, the second stage of the campaign began.

The lone voice crying near Wardha had been silenced. Now from a hundred places in India re-echoed his words, "It is wrong to help the British war effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance." This time the speakers were those who had formerly held office in the Congress Provincial Governments the most distinguished public leaders in the land. They were imprisoned for twelve months each. Abul Kalam Azad, like Nehru, preferred to make an attack on the Government and not to proclaim the creed of non-violence.

The Government had forbidden the Press to report the progress of the campaign, and Gandhi stopped publication of *Harijan* in December as a protest. By now five or six hundred leading Indians were in prison.

Early in January 1941 the third stage of the campaign was launched. The voice crying in the wilderness at Wardha had been silenced and five hundred voices had taken up the cry. Five hundred voices had been silenced, and now five thousand of India's people swelled the chorus. "The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance." "The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance." "THE ONLY WORTHY EFFORT IS TO RESIST ALL WAR WITH NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE." The words seemed to whisper down the warm winds, to murmur along the course of mighty rivers, to echo and re-echo from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas.

Picked men from local Congress Committees had formed this third corps. When they, too, were imprisoned, rank and file members of Congress were called on to take their place, in still larger numbers. "The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance." Everywhere the forbidden words were spoken and the speakers submitted without a struggle to arrest and imprisonment, knowing that the message remained free, the truth could not be imprisoned with them.

By mid-summer over 20,000 had been convicted, as many as 14,000 being in jail at one time. The number would unquestionably have been many times larger but for the limits which Gandhi imposed on the campaign.

He believed that the soul of India was speaking, and by speaking using freedom for its true purpose. More than that, he

believed India was speaking to the world. "My mind is wholly concentrated on trying this great experiment," he had said at Ramgarh, "because it will not only benefit India but the whole world." When, in April 1941, the *Hindu* complained that the campaign had produced no appreciable impression on the war effort Gandhi replied that it was not intended to hamper that effort. It was a moral protest: "A token of the yearning of a political organisation to achieve the freedom of 350 million people through purely non-violent effort and therefore to affect the future destiny of the world. An ambitious claim, but it is there.. Would friends ask me, at this supreme moment in the life of the world and my own life, to deny the faith that has sustained me for nearly half a century?"

In August came the news of Tagore's death. Gandhi had visited the poet in February 1940. In December, only a few months before his death, Tagore had paid a last tribute to the Mahatma in a poem entitled *Gandhi Maharaj*.

"We who follow Gandhi Maharaj's lead  
 have one thing in common among us;  
 We never fill our purses with spoils from the poor  
 Nor bend our knees to the rich.  
 When they come bullying to us  
 With raised fist and menacing stick,  
 We smile to them, and say:  
 Your reddening stare  
 May startle babies out of sleep  
 but how frighten those who refuse to fear?  
 Our speeches are straight and simple,  
 No diplomatic turns to twist their meaning:  
 Confounding penal code  
 They guide with perfect ease the victims  
 to the border of Jail.  
 And when these crowd the path of the prison gate  
 their stains of insult are washed clean,  
 their age-long shackles drop to the dust,  
 And on their foreheads are stamped  
 Gandhiji's blessings."

Tagore, too, had been an old friend of C.F. Andrews, and they had more than once agreed in criticising some action of Gandhi's, such as the burning of foreign cloth. 'The Great

Sentinel,' Gandhi had called him, and despite difference of outlook between the Satyagraha Ashram and Tagore's communal centre at Shantiniketan, the Abode of Peace, the two great Indians had recognised how indispensable each was to the other. With the going of Tagore, Gandhi was outwardly alone. But in his heart the Poet still lived, as Andrews lived. He knew, as well as though they stood beside him, what they would say, what they would do.

In September 1941, Mr. Churchill had made it clear that the Atlantic Charter did not in any way effect the British Government's policy towards India. Whatever other qualities the Prime Minister might possess, and they were many, he was not the man to restore Indian confidence in the good intentions of the British. Had not Churchill been a member of the Great War Cabinet and party to the confounding of Indian hopes? Had he not bitterly opposed even the proposals of the Round Table Conference, and poured scorn on 'the half-naked fakir', who represented the Indian cause? His latest brusque utterance was all too much in character.

But events were moving with terrible speed. In December the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour. Almost simultaneously the Government released the Civil Disobedience prisoners, and as the Japanese swept across the Pacific and through Burma and Malaya, the urgency of some settlement in India became clear.

Gandhi would be no party to it. He retired from the leadership, and in January restarted *Harijan*. A Japanese monk, Kai Shoo, had been living in the Ashram since 1935, and now he was interned as an enemy alien. Had the British learnt nothing since the day when they refused Kallenbach permission to come to India and sent him to internment in the Isle of Man?

Soon afterwards Gandhi journeyed to Calcutta in order to meet Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang Kai-shek afterwards made it plain that his sympathies were with the Indian nationalists in their desire to shake off foreign rule at once, but he was most concerned to know what would be India's attitude to a Japanese invasion, and particularly what would be Gandhi's advice. The Chinese leader probably understood far better than most Western observers at the time that

whether or not Gandhi held the reins of Congress he remained the personification of the Indian people, so that his word would carry great weight with the Indian masses, whether uttered through Congress or outside it.

"Your civil resistance," said the Generalissimo, "is not mere passivity, I am sure. But these foes may not listen to active civil resistance and may make even preaching of non-violence impossible."

"All I can say," Gandhi had answered, "is that God gives me guidance to react to the situations as they arise. Therefore though I cannot say how exactly I will react in the case of invasion, I know God will give me proper guidance. But this talk cannot, I know, satisfy you."

We may be quite sure that it did not satisfy Sir Stafford Cripps either. Gandhi subsequently told the American journalist, Louis Fischer, what had passed between them. "When Cripps arrived (at the end of March) he sent me a telegram asking me to come to see him in New Delhi. I did not wish to go, but I went because I thought it would do some good. I had heard rumours about the contents of the British Government's offer he brought to India, but I had not seen the offer. He gave it to me, and after a brief study I said to him, 'Why did you come if this is what you have to offer? I would advise you to take the first plane home'. Cripps replied: 'I will consider that'." After this Gandhi withdrew and the Congress representatives were free to handle the negotiations in their own way. Gandhi allowed himself only one public comment. The Cripps offer, he said, was 'a post-dated cheque'. The phrase 'on a crashing bank' was subsequently tacked on by an Indian journalist.

It is unnecessary to repeat here details of the negotiations that failed. The two main difficulties were insuperable. The Cripps offer stipulated that any Province or Indian State must be free to adhere to a new constitution or not. This is what Gandhi afterwards described as 'perpetual vivisection'. Prior acceptance of this was made an indispensable condition for setting up a provisional Indian Government, and was not therefore subject to the decision of the later constitution-making body at all. Even if the provisional Government had been set up it would have been 'subject to the Viceroy's reserved power'.

In fact, it would have been ruled on all the vital issues of defence and foreign policy from Whitehall.

The failure naturally brought a reaction from the Congress ranks and Gandhi was once more restored to the leadership, his prestige enhanced by his refusal to engage in the bargaining process which had seemed to promise so much and which had failed so completely.

Gandhi's attitude was made clear at once. If India were free he would propose negotiations with Japan, just as he would have attempted to negotiate with any other opponent. His appeal to the Japanese showed no signs of 'defeatism'. "I would ask you to make no mistake about the fact that you will be sadly disillusioned if you believe that you will receive a willing welcome from India," he wrote. "The end and aim of the movement for British withdrawal is to prepare India, by making her free, for resisting all militarist and imperialist ambition, whether it is called British imperialism, German Nazism, or your pattern." He condemned the Japanese attack upon China and warned them that if they attempted to enter India, "we will not fail in resisting you with all the might that our country can muster".

Would it be by violence or non-violence? "I cannot say," Gandhi wrote, "that Free India will take part in militarism, or choose to go the non-violent way. But I say without hesitation that if I can turn India to non-violence, I will certainly do so." If he failed in that, if the Congress leaders decided to use armed force, Gandhi would retire once more and summon those who would follow him to form a non-violent corps.

The British, presumably believing that India would have to fight anyway, had not been willing to hand over full control. That they should be ready to leave the nation divided in this hour of peril seemed to many the worst offence of all. It brought a hardening even in Gandhi's attitude. "Though I do not wish any humiliation to Britain—and therefore no defeat—my mind refuses to give her moral support." It was now that the first conception of the 'Quit India' resolution came to him. "The original idea of asking the British to go burst upon me suddenly," he told Fischer afterwards. "It was the Cripps fiasco that inspired the idea. Hardly had he gone when it seized hold of me . . . . Soon after Cripps' departure I wrote a letter to Horace



Alexander in reply to his letter to me. Thereafter the idea possessed me. Then began the propaganda. Later I framed the resolution. My first feeling was, 'We need an answer to Cripps' failure'."

At the end of April the A.I.C.C. met at Allahabad and passed a significant resolution. "In case an invasion takes place," one paragraph ran, "it must be resisted. Such resistance can only take the form of non-violent non-co-operation as the British Government has prevented the organisation of national defence by the people in any other way. The Committee would therefore expect the people of India to offer complete non-violent non-co-operation to the invading forces and not to render any assistance to them.

Gandhi had won. Twice within a year it had seemed that Congress had thrown off his influence and was prepared to make a bargain with Britain to use military force in return for home rule. Twice Gandhi had stood out. Twice negotiations had failed and Congress had turned again to the Mahatma, an old man of seventy-two, who had stood unflinchingly and uncompromisingly for non-violence. Still they did not accept Satyagraha as a faith. They accepted it once more as a policy "because the British Government has prevented the organisation of national defence by the people in any other way".

In May, police raided the Congress offices and seized records of this important meeting which were subsequently published in August. The outcome of the Congress discussion was the famous 'Quit India' resolution, adopted by the Working Committee at a meeting at Wardha in July.

The resolution declared that British rule in India must end immediately. Congress had so far followed a policy of non-embarrassment even at the risk of making its Satyagraha ineffective. The failure of British statesmen to respond, and the breakdown of negotiations with Cripps, had led to a rapid increase of ill-will against Britain, and a growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms. Blame for the communal tangle was laid on Britain—the presence of British Power had been a direct incentive to communal fanatics, Princes, Zamindars and parasites of every kind to compete for power and favour. If Britain's political domination was withdrawn representative Indians could form a provisional Government "which

will later evolve a scheme whereby a constituent Assembly can be convened in order to prepare a constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all sections of the people". The provisional Government would confer with Great Britain for the adjustment of future relations and for co-operation against aggression; and to show that there was no intention of jeopardising the Allied position they agreed to the stationing of armed forces in India, to ward off Japanese aggression and to help China.

If this moderate offer was not accepted, Congress would reluctantly "utilise all the non-violent strength it has gathered since 1920, when it adopted non-violence as part of its policy for the vindication of its political rights and liberties. Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi."

This was the draft which came before the All-India Congress Committee at the beginning of August. The resolution was passed, and Gandhi addressed the meeting.

"I take up my task of leading you in this struggle," he said, "not as your commander, not as your controller, but as the humble servant of you all; and he who serves best becomes the chief among them."

He spoke of his inner voice. "Call it conscience, call it anything you like; call it the promptings of my basic nature; I do not mind how you describe it, but there is something there. That voice tells me that I shall have to fight against the whole world and stand alone; it also tells me: 'You are safe so long as you stare the world in the face, although the world may have bloodshot eyes. Do not fear the world but go ahead, with the fear of God in you.'"

"I want to live the whole span of my life," he said later, "but I don't think I will live so long."

It seems clear that he understood well what lay ahead. But before launching the struggle, Gandhi said, he would address a letter to the Viceroy and await his reply; it might be a week, a fortnight or three weeks.

The last hours of freedom on August 8th in Bombay were crowded and infected with the immensity of great events. Questions were flung at Gandhi from all sides and he answered them with the calmness that came to him in moments of emergency, when his mind was made up. One of the questions was about

peace. Gandhi said simply, "Peace I want among all mankind, but I don't want peace at any cost, and certainly not by placating the aggressor or at the cost of honour."

The Viceroy wanted peace, too, of a different kind. He did not wait to receive the letter, but had Gandhi and the members of the Working Committee detained under the Defence of India Regulations at 4.30 a.m. on the morning of August 9.

Gandhi wrote to Lord Linlithgow on August 14 reproaching him for not attempting to reach agreement before taking drastic action, and protesting against the suggestion that Congress was prepared to adopt violent as well as non-violent means of revolt. He pleaded for a reconsideration of the Government's policy, which the Viceroy declined to undertake.

So Gandhi became a prisoner, not in jail, as he had been so often before, but in the luxurious palace of the Aga Khan, at Poona. He who had found peace in a room with four bare walls in the village of Segaon, and had for nearly thirty years lived in poverty and simplicity, was confined in a palace, the opulent home of an absentee Prince, a wealthy Europeanised man, a spiritual leader, a Moslem who had been one of the principal delegates representing British India at the Third Round Table Conference.

Serious disturbances had broken out all over India when news of the arrests became known. There were allegations of stone-throwing, burning of premises, and, later, dislocation of railway communications, and through the censorship came ugly news of lathi charges, firing, and the reintroduction of flogging. The detention of the Working Committee had been followed by the arrest of all the known Congress leaders throughout the country and the whole machinery of direction, control and restraint had been deliberately smashed. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that the elements that favoured violence and secrecy should seize their opportunity, encouraged by Subhas Chandra Bose, who had now gone over to the Axis camp and was broadcasting regularly from Berlin.

But Government heaped the responsibility for everything that happened upon the Congress, although the Viceroy had ignored Gandhi's plea in September that the Congress leaders should be released, and repressive measures withdrawn in order that the way to conciliation might be explored.

In December, Gandhi wrote again, complaining that the statements made about him in Government quarters "contain palpable departures from truth". He had, he said, imposed restraint upon himself for a period of six months which was now drawing to a close. Unless some way could be found to end the deadlock he had no alternative but to adopt the remedy which Satyagraha prescribed for such moments of trial. "In a sentence, it is 'crucify the flesh by fasting'. That same law forbids its use except as a last resort. I do not want to use it if I can avoid it." He begged the Viceroy to send for him, or send someone to him, to convince him of his errors.

The Viceroy, in reply, assumed that Gandhi might be wishing to retrace his steps and disassociate himself from the August policy, in which case he would consider the matter further.

Gandhi protested that he could not express any opinion of events which he could not influence or control, and of which he had but a one-sided account. He summed up by saying "(1) If you want me to act singly convince me that I was wrong, and and I will make ample amends. (?) If you want me to make any proposal on behalf of Congress you should put me among the Congress Working Committee members. I do plead with you to make up your mind to end the impasse."

The Viceroy would do neither, and Gandhi wrote on January 29th 1943 that he must accordingly undergo a fast. He would commence after the early morning breakfast of February 9th a fast for 21 days. "Usually during my fasts I take water with the addition of salts. But nowadays my system refuses water. This time therefore I propose to add juices of citrus fruit to make the water drinkable, for my wish is not to fast unto death, but to survive the ordeal of the fast if God so wills."

He was not fasting for his release. He was fasting for an end to the deadlock, which might be found either by the Viceroy sending someone to persuade him that he had indeed committed a serious mistake and was morally involved in the violence that had followed the August arrests, or by his being allowed to discuss the position with the other members of the Working Committee who were also detained.

The Viceroy's reply was a considered insult. The charges against Congress would have to be met sooner or later, he declared, and referred to a mass of evidence which he did not offer

to put before his prisoner. If, in the meantime, "by any action such as you now appear to be contemplating, (you) attempt to find an easy way out, the judgment will go against you by default". Gandhi answered, "Your letter, from a Satyagrahi's stand-point, is an invitation to fast." He deplored the imputation of a base and cowardly motive, and the description of the fast as "a form of political blackmail".

The Government of India were, however, worried at the possibility of Gandhi dying while in detention, and on February 7 the Home Department proposed that he should be set at liberty "for the duration of the fast", and added "The Government of India trust that you will be able to arrange for your accommodation away from the Aga Khan's Palace". To this Gandhi answered tersely that if it was for his convenience, he did not need it. If it was for the convenience of the Government, he was sorry he was unable to suit them. He would avoid inconvenience to the Government as far as possible. If he was released he would not fast in terms of his previous letters, but would survey the situation *anew*. He postponed the commencement of his fast until 10th February to give the Government time to reply.

The reply was that the Government's position remained the same. If Gandhi fasted in detention, declared the Home Department solemnly, he would do so at his own risk. He might have his own medical attendants and receive visits, with the permission of the Government.

So the 'one more fast', that he had somehow foreseen at Rajkot began in the incongruous surroundings of the turquoise-coloured palace at Poona. By the seventh day the bulletins began to sound an ominous note. His sleep was broken, he was growing weaker. Two days later the bulletin reported that he was extremely weak. If the fast was not ended without delay it might be too late to save his life. During the weekend which followed he lay in his wheel bed in the lofty room of the Palace, his pulse almost imperceptible. Gandhi was dying in captivity, declared the London newspapers.

India had become, said one correspondent, a land of protest, processions and prayers. Mills and markets had shut, and three Indian members of the Viceroy's Council had resigned in protest against the Government's refusal to release Gandhi.

But the Government having made its decision, kept to it with brutal thoroughness. On February 22 they published in Delhi a deplorable White Paper, which was afterwards reprinted in England. Gandhi was detained. He had not been directly charged, convicted, or sentenced. He was at the point of death. Yet the Government could issue what was often described as an indictment of Gandhi in which his attitude and his utterances were twisted to suggest that he had acted not altogether in good faith, had been prepared to condone violence, and was responsible for all that had occurred in India since his arrest. Apart from a passing reference to successful 'police action' nothing was said about Lathi charges, the firing, the whippings, and the detention of political prisoners in underground cells for 'interrogation'. On February 24 Mr. Churchill voiced his approval of the decision not to release Gandhi.

Gandhi survived. His doctors administered sweet lime juice and water during the crisis, since the nausea prevented him from drinking water without his addition, but by February 24 when he had slightly recovered he reduced the quantity considerably, keeping to the minimum additions which would enable him to drink water.

He still observed the vital part of his daily routine. In the dark hours of early morning there were prayers by his bedside, in which Mrs. Gandhi and others joined, for she had been with him since the beginning of his internment. During the day he would talk for a few minutes to friends, although his voice was scarcely more than a whisper now. The first European to see him was an old friend, Horace Alexander. At dusk the evening prayer was held again by his bedside.

Bernard Shaw was one of the Englishmen who protested vigorously against the Government's treatment of Gandhi. "The imprisonment of Gandhi is the stupidest blunder the Government has let itself be landed in by its Right Wing of incurable richards.... The King should release Gandhi unconditionally as an act of grace unconcerned with policy, and apologise to him for the mental defectiveness of his Cabinet."

But the Cabinet had no regrets and Mr. Amery in the House of Commons declared that the correspondence between Gandhi and the Viceroy "contains no indication that Mr. Gandhi sees

cause for regret at the outbreaks of murder, violence and sabotage". But Gandhi had said in his letter of January 19, "Of course I deplore the happenings which have taken place since August 9 last", and had reaffirmed, "from the housetop, that I am as confirmed a believer in non-violence as I have ever been". The Viceroy in reply had said, "I am very glad to read your unequivocal condemnation of violence."

The Government refused permission to enter the Palace to most of the guests who were invited to be present at the breaking of the fast, but were prepared to make exceptions in the case of Devadas and Ramdas Gandhi. The two sons abstained, as a protest against the exclusion of the others.

On the morning of March 3, Mrs. Gandhi handed her husband the glass of orange juice and water with which he broke his fast. Several others interned in the Palace were there, Sarojini Naidu, and Miraben who sang his favourite English hymn, Hindus, Moslems and Parsis who read from their respective sacred literatures. A Chinese professor had come, to read from Buddhist writings. Horace Alexander was there and read passages from St. Paul, and Mr. Aney, who had resigned from the Viceroy's Council during the fast, read prayers in Sanskrit. But there was one more gap in the circle of friendly faces. Mahadev Desai was not there. He had died at his master's side in the Palace on August 15, 1942, a week after their detention.

The fast was over. Gandhi was still a prisoner. Outwardly his ordeal had failed. Outwardly it had often failed before. The Non-cooperation campaigns had failed, with the outbreak of violence. The Civil Disobedience campaigns had failed too to achieve Swaraj. The 'open rebellion' of 1942 had failed before it commenced. Now the fast had failed—outwardly.

But had not each of the great struggles strengthened India's will to freedom? Had not the discipline of the campaigns taught India self-rule? Had not Gandhi in jail been a potent symbol to the world of India's slavery, the open exposure of the injustice which she suffered?

Had he not spoken his message to the world? Born into an age of destruction, he had been a soldier of peace. "I believe in peace. But I do not want peace at any price. I do not want the peace that you find in stone; I do not want the peace that you find in the grave; but I do want the peace which you find

embedded in the human breast, which is exposed to the arrows of a whole world, but which is protected from all harm by the power of Almighty God."

His was an open rebellion against all that was evil, against evil in himself, in his nation, in the world. The world had fought back with its worldly weapons. They had shut up this speaker of dangerous truth in the Palace of a wordly Prince. The 'half-naked fakir' would make no more seditious speeches for a time. Perhaps he would die there. He would die a failure. India would not yet be her own master. That would come in her rulers' good time. War would bring victory, and victory would vindicate the war, would vanquish the assembled forces of evil and aggression. In the Chancelleries they were sure of it. They had done well.

Yet somewhere in the vastness of Russia there were men who had read Tolstoy in their youth and had followed with careful attention reports of this Indian disciple in the newspapers. In Germany, mostly in concentration camps, there were men who thought of him in the long hours of darkness, when pain made sleep impossible. In England there were men in the chapel at Wormwood Scrubs on the Sunday morning in August 1942, who had heard in that brief statement something that the chaplain could not possibly have said, and it sent them back to their cells with a feeling of peace and exultation, and the certainty of a victory that Whitehall and the Wilhelmstrasse knew nothing about. In the chapel a voice had said, "The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance."

The fast, Gandhi told Horace Alexander, ought to have been for forty days, not only twenty-one. "People will call this fast a fraud—and it is a fraud. I am taking a little fruit juice in my water." But he also spoke seriously: "There will soon be a famine. If I were set free I would do what I could to remove its causes."

In June 1943 Gandhi wrote to the Home Department of the Indian Government. His letter was "mainly concerned, I gather, with the growing economic distress and hardship experienced by the poorer classes. It implores Linlithgow to do something which would alleviate conditions without delay," wrote D.V. Tahmankar (who was not allowed to cable this message to Britain). When Mr. Amery was asked in July about



the correspondence he was "not prepared to disclose" the number or contents of the letters. How then could anyone in Britain know what views Gandhi had on the situation? "It is not desired that they should."

It was not until November, when the death-roll in Bengal was one and a half million, that the Indian famine was fully debated in the British Parliament. Mr. Amery held out no hope of a real solution whilst war continued. "Our urgent duty is to finish the war as quickly as possible," he said. "It is only in that way indeed that we shall relieve the strain of war upon India which has led to the present distress."

"When all about me are dying for want of food," Gandhi once said, "the only thing permissible for me is to feed the hungry." But this offer to help feed the hungry was rejected, he remained a prisoner in a palace.

Kasturba was dying there, as Mahadev had died in the first days of captivity. The heart-attacks that had not prevented her from courting detention in Rajkot had not deterred her from sharing her husband's imprisonment. We have only two glimpses of her life in the Palace. She was present at the prayer meetings in the early mornings during the fast. She gave her husband the drink with which the fast was broken. The glimpses are enough; there is the pattern of her life. At the end of November she had two heart attacks, and then another. "When the Government sounded her about her release, she had said: 'Not unless we are all released'. But she had confided to visitors during Gandhi's fast, 'I shall not be coming out of this place alive. These palatial walls oppress me. I long for my low-roofed mud hut at Sevagram. This is my final good-bye'." On February 22, 1944 she died in captivity, aged seventy-three, and was cremated.

For a time it seemed that Gandhi too would die in the Palace. By April "his general condition is weak and is causing some anxiety", according to the official bulletin. Lord Wavell, the new Viceroy, was at last able to release him unconditionally on health grounds. Mr. Amery sounded reluctant: "The matter is in the hands of the Viceroy. Mr. Gandhi's release is primarily his concern."

Gandhi went out through the massive iron gates of the palace early on the morning of Saturday 6th May—in the Inspector-

General of Prisons' car. Miraben and Pyarelal were released at the same time. At Parnakuti he was received by his friend Lady Thackersey, with bouquets of roses and jasmine. A crowd greeted him as he entered the grounds in his usual garb—a loin cloth and white shawl, and supporting himself on a bamboo staff. In the evening, though looking exhausted, he was well enough to take part in evening prayers on the open terrace. At the Palace the Aga Khan's personal furnishings, which had been removed at Gandhi's request were already being replaced....

Quiet and rest were essential and five days later the Poona mail stopped at the Mitunga level-crossing, eight miles from Bombay, where Gandhi and his party, who occupied a third-class compartment, alighted by means of a portable ladder. From there Gandhi with his scanty luggage—including four rose bushes—was driven to Juhu once more.

On June 29 he was just well enough to speak to a group of Congress Party workers at Poona. What would he find to say about the activities of Congressmen after the arrests, about the abhorred secrecy, deception and occasional violence of the nationalist underground movement?

"I can say at once that as a man wedded to truth and non-violence not merely as a matter of discipline or expediency, but as a rule of conduct in all walks of life, I can endorse nothing untruthful or violent. But I refuse to sit in judgment on the actions of others. Nor is it of any avail at this moment and in this meeting to weigh the individual or collective acts of Congressmen and others in the scales of non-violence and truth.

"Suffice it to say experience has led me to the unshakable conviction that our success has been mathematically proportionate to the extent to which we have adhered to truth and non-violence. The phenomenal awakening of the masses during the last twenty-five years has been entirely due to the purity of our means. And to the extent that untruth and violence have crept in they have hindered our progress.

"Your faith in me overwhelms me. My accidental release has given rise to great expectations. I am doubtful whether I deserve all this confidence. But this much I know, that whatever strength I may have is entirely due to the fact that I am a votary of truth and non-violence. Some friends have told me truth and non-violence have no place in politics and worldly

affairs. I don't agree. I have no use for them as means of individual salvation. Their introduction and application in everyday life has been my experiment all along."

In November 1944, after talks with Mr. Jinnah had proved abortive and Gandhi's new efforts to meet Wavell and the Working Committee had been contemptuously rejected by Mr. Amery as "obviously....not....even a starting point for profitable discussion", Pyarelal wrote from Sevagram to an English friend:

"We are passing through anxious times. Never has Bapu found himself in the position in which he finds himself to-day, that of being a helpless witness to a reign of unbridled corruption, falsehood and repression. And the picture of India is only an intensified miniature of what is happening in the rest of the world. Never have such big hopes rested on men so incapable of realising them. All powers, big and small, are out to scramble for themselves at the expense of the weak and the backward. The cynical indifference is appalling. Is there then no hope for the oppressed and the downtrodden? Must the case of righteousness go by default?

"How must he, who has lived all his life for truth and ahimsa, testify his faith in God and register his protest against the evil that is now going on under his eyes, so as to move the conscience of mankind? The thought oppresses Bapu and almost chokes him. He is waiting on God for a sign. In the meantime he is carrying on his desperate, lone struggle against seemingly invincible evil with all his might and main. The candle is being burned furiously at both ends. The question is how long at this rate can the blaze be sustained?"

## CHAPTER XII

### FREE INDIA

MR. AMERY made it quite clear that Gandhi had been released solely on grounds of ill-health, and that the position of those members of the Working Committee who were still under detention remained unchanged. Taking this declaration at its face value Gandhi, within three weeks of his arrival at Juhu, was reported as agreeing that his release was only temporary and had no political significance. 'Temporary' was his own perfectly logical addition. If the Working Committee were to continue in detention, and he who was identified with them was at large because of ill-health, the recovery of a degree of health should coincide with his return to detention. That was not at all the idea of the British authorities. True, they had pressed him to vacate the Aga Khan's palace 'for the duration of the fast', a year before, and had proposed to take him back into custody when he recovered. But this time he was meant to remain at liberty, always provided he was politically inactive—or at least ineffectual. Gandhi had been unable to suit the Government about leaving the palace for the fast, and he was unable to suit them in this. Whatever the British view, the choice for him was between honourable political activities bearing some fruit, as soon as his health made them possible, or a return to physical as well as political incarceration.

Gandhi lost little time in testing the position. He wrote to Lord Wavell for permission to see the Congress Working Committee members who were still detained. This would not necessarily have involved their release; there was even a precedent for such consultations in the prison conference between Gandhi and Nehru brought about by Sapru and Jayakar during the 1930 Civil Disobedience Campaign. Without an exchange of views between the leaders who had been separately interned for two years, no political progress could be expected. "Even if I was quite well," Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy, "I could do little or nothing unless I know the mind of the Working Committee of Congress. I pleaded with you as a prisoner for per-

mission to see them. I plead now as a free man for such permission." Finally, in case the Viceroy had any doubt or difficulty in granting this request, would he see Gandhi to discuss the matter in person?

Wavell refused. He felt that a meeting between them could have no value at that time, and would not allow Gandhi to communicate with the Congress Committee. Gandhi was probably not surprised, however much he might be grieved. No British Viceroy had been able to deny him audience for long. Lord Irwin had negotiated with him at the height of the Civil Disobedience struggle; Lord Willingdon had come to end the policy of personal negotiation with the rebels and within a few weeks had been obliged to follow Irwin's good example; Lord Linlithgow had met Gandhi many times; and now Lord Wavell, wisely regarded as a better Viceroy than either of his immediate predecessors, was beginning anew the policy of Imperial aloofness. But Gandhi understood that his real opponent was Winston Churchill. Churchill, he had been forewarned, was out to crush him, determined now, a fifteen years before to put an end to the disgusting spectacles of the half-naked fakir striding up the steps of the viceregal palace to negotiate on equal terms with the representative of the King Emperor. Churchill had refused to see Gandhi in London at the time of the Round Table Conference; Churchill's minister in India must refuse to see him at Delhi now. Gandhi's comment on the threat of Churchillian boycott was that "the beauty of it for me and the pity of it for him is that no one can crush a Satyagrahi, who offers his body as a willing sacrifice, thus leaving the spirit free". So now he prepared to end his 'temporary' release. The rumour spread abroad at the end of June that Gandhi would ask the Viceroy to place him under arrest again. His health was slightly improved, his minimum requests for the resumption of Indian political life had been repulsed, his place was in detention. He would be with his friends in one way even if the other was denied him. If the Viceroy refused to arrest him, there was always some appropriate form of individual civil disobedience that would dramatise the deadlock, and compel Wavell either to meet him or imprison him.

Gandhi's immediate associates opposed his inclination with every argument at their command. There was, they urged, a

saving clause in Wavell's letter of refusal. He had written that "if after your convalescence and on further reflection you have a definite and constructive policy to propose for the furtherance of India's welfare, I shall be glad to consider it". By "a definite and constructive policy", Wavell meant something fundamentally different from the 'Quit India' resolution of August 1942, which had originated in Gandhi's mind, and to which Gandhi had since his release pledged his adherence, and which Wavell had told him in this correspondence was not, in his view, a reasonable or practical policy for the immediate future. No matter, urged the friends, if Lord Wavell knew more clearly just what it was that Gandhi wanted to discuss with the Working Committee perhaps he would look more favourably on it—and in any case what was to be lost by trying? Gandhi allowed himself to be persuaded.

A British newspaper correspondent offered to carry his views to the Viceroy. Gandhi realised that the journalist could be received at Delhi, preferred a living advocate whenever possible, and accepted the offer. His confidential statement reached the Viceroy and the world at large through the columns of the correspondent's newspaper in Britain. No doubt this particular journalist proved him right that what was an undoubted scoop for him might also be a good thing for India; public opinion would be aroused in support of Gandhi's modest and sensible proposals for ending the two years' deadlock. But the fact remains that, in making Mr. Gandhi's decision for him, and making it wrongly, Mr. Stuart Gelder of the *News-Chronicle* left Lord Wavell with no opportunity of considering the proposals before Whitehall and in effect had torn them to shreds, and squandered the last slender chance of an immediate end to the impasse.

Gandhi's suggestions having been revealed to the world, the British Government was obliged to deal with them immediately. The House of Lords debated India on 25th July and the Government rejected the Gandhi proposals categorically. In the Commons debate three days later, Reginald Sorenson read a cable from Gandhi: "It is the most constructive suggestion that I could conceive. If it is not accepted even as a basis for friendly discussion and for permission to be given to me to see members of the Working Committee, who alone can speak

with authority—then I must reluctantly come to the conclusion that the British Government does not want a solution of the political deadlock.” Mr. Amery confirmed in the debate that Gandhi’s proposals “obviously do not form even a starting-point for profitable discussion, either with Lord Wavell, or with interned Congress Party leaders”.

These two debates were significant in other ways. In the Lords the political tangle and the economic problems were separately discussed; in the Commons they were taken together. But both Houses reached the same conclusion—that the economic situation of India was grave, and that there could be no real economic progress without a political solution. Yet they could do no more towards a political solution than reiterate that the Cripps offer of 1942, rejected by all Indian parties, was still open. Lord Strabolgi, indeed, tried to slide round the difficulty by asserting that what Gandhi was prepared to recommend to the Working Committee was ‘in effect’ the Cripps offer, but Mr. Amery easily disposing of that illusion in the House of Commons, was, for once, in agreement with Gandhi. The failure of the British Government and Parliament to hold out any new hope to India was itself a vindication of the Quit India policy. “It is impossible,” Gandhi declared, “for the British rulers to get behind the Indian skin and know the real disease. The consensus of opinion in the House of Commons is for me a terrible pointer. It confirms me in my opinion that the ‘Quit India’ resolution was no hasty cry conceived in anger.”

Now another aspect of the problem of India’s freedom claimed his attention. Rajagopalachari had put forward a formula for settlement of the separatist claims of the Muslim League, and although this was anathema to many Congressmen and to the interned Working Committee, the offer had received Gandhi’s support in principle during his own imprisonment. Rajagopalachari proposed that at the end of the War there should be a plebiscite in areas in the North-West and North-East of India, after delimitation by a mixed commission. Mr. Jinnah, submitting the proposal to the Muslim League Council at the end of July, told them that it was “the shadow and husk of a maimed and mutilated Pakistan”, but allowed the Council to direct him to negotiate with Gandhi on the matter.

The two leaders were to meet in mid-August, but Jinnah

developed a high temperature and the discussion was postponed to early September, when Gandhi journeyed from Segaoon, where he had resumed his village work, to Bombay. It was always Gandhi who went the second mile to meet the Muslim leader.

The discussions failed, as it had been clear from Jinnah's utterances to the League Council that they must fail. Gandhi was willing to concede the principle of self-determination of genuine claims by general plebiscite; Jinnah demanded that in the plebiscite only Muslims should vote. Gandhi went to the length of suggesting third party arbitration, which Jinnah refused. The main result of these discussions was a growing conviction that the existence of the British as a powerful third party in India hindered a solution. There were also signs that some of the extremists on both sides—both Hindu and Moslem—were now more prepared to see reason.

Events outside India now claimed attention. The war was drawing towards a close in Europe, and in March 1945 the Viceroy returned to London for consultations, in which it was believed that he insisted on some attempt to end the political deadlock in India. At San Francisco the statesmen of the Allied Powers, with victory in sight, were meeting to settle the framework of the United Nations, the new world order that was to succeed where the League of Nations had failed, and to lay the foundations of lasting international peace. The war-weary nations allowed their hopes to run high, but Gandhi saw that the new international organization was only the old power politics writ large. "I very much fear that behind the structure of world security that is sought to be raised lurk the mistrust and fear which breeds war. It seems well for me to record my convictions in the matter. I reiterate my conviction that there will be no peace for the Allies, or the world unless they shed their belief in the efficacy of war and its accompanying terrible deception and fraud, and are determined to hammer out a real peace based on the freedom and equality of all races and nations." There should be no armed peace imposed upon the forcibly disarmed side, he insisted, even the maintenance of an international police would be a concession to human weakness and not an emblem of peace.

In May came victory in Europe, and in June the Working Committee was freed and Nehru, Patel, Azad and Gandhi met



for the first time in three years, at Bombay. Lord Wavell had invited all the Indian leaders to a conference at Simla, and the Working Committee accepted, though Gandhi went not as an official representative of the Congress. So, more than a year after his release, Gandhi met the Viceroy. The Simla Conference failed; Congress defending its claim to be representative of Indians in general and not only Hindus in particular, resisted the claim of the Muslim League to nominate all the Muslims in the proposed new Executive Council. Lord Wavell was chivalrous as no Viceroy had been before. The Conference had been his idea and its failure, he insisted, was his responsibility. India appreciated a new grace and humility in Delhi, but the fact remained that the deadlock was unbroken.

In August two atom-bombs were hurled without warning upon Japan, and a wave of anger and apprehension passed over Asia. No Western Power, it was said, would have perpetrated these outrages on another Western Power; the atom-bomb was the real measure of the West's attitude towards the East, notwithstanding an Atlantic Charter which 'did not apply to India'. So far from shaking Gandhi's faith in the relevance of non-violence, the atom-bomb seemed to him the final evidence of the impossibility of defensive warfare under modern conditions. From many utterances on the subject, these from the columns of *Harijan* in June 1947 are typical. "...In this age of the atom-bomb there is no weapon like non-violent resistance. The weapon of violence, even if it is the atom-bomb, becomes useless when matched against true non-violence." Now that man's power of physical destruction was virtually limitless, the decisive struggle for peace must take place in the hearts, minds and wills of the people.

It was on non-violence he insisted in his further conferences with his Congress colleagues. In December the Working Committee ended a five-day session with a resolution condemning the burning of public property, cutting of telegraph wires, derailling of trains and intimidation—repudiated, in fact, the activities that had been typical of the Congress rank and file after the arrest of the leaders in August 1942—and reaffirmed the Congress policy of non-violence. The resolution was understood to have been drafted by Gandhi.

Now a fresh initiative from Britain began to take shape.

Elections were held in which Congress eliminated the Mahasabha communalists and most independent candidates, winning all the non-Muslim seats and all the general joint-electorate seats, while the League confined its candidates to seats reserved for Muslims and won them all. The subsequent provincial elections were fought out in an atmosphere of excitement and extremism that gave no ground for hope that compromise would eventually prevail. In January and February 1946 a Parliamentary delegation visited India to assess the position.

Meanwhile Gandhi had been busy. He engaged in a series of meetings with the retiring Governor of Bengal; helped to control riots over trials of members of the Indian National Army—trained by the Japanese for the ‘liberation’ of India—and successfully interceded with the Viceroy for the lives of four of them. He restarted *Harijan*. He discussed the States’ position with the Nawab of Bhopal, and the whole question of India’s political future with the Nawab and the Aga Khan. In December, 1944, the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes had resigned in protest against plans by the Political Department which made it evident that the Government of India was heading towards a planned economy on an all-India basis, in which the participation of the States would be essential, and unbridled States’ industrial activity no longer tolerable, irrespective of the separate treaties with the Crown held by some forty of the larger States. In July 1945 the resignations had been withdrawn although it was not clear in what way the challenge to States’ separatism had diminished. Now, in February 1946, with new political developments imminent, the States were hoping for a chance to escape from the intrusion of central government planning in any transfer of power from British to Indian hands.

In March the British Cabinet Mission arrived, and at their request Gandhi travelled to Delhi by ‘special’ train, consisting of an engine and one third-class carriage, to meet Lord Pethick-Lawrence and Sir Stafford Cripps. To the great crowd at his prayer meeting that night he said: “The Mission has come in good faith. They will not betray us.” He quartered himself in the municipal sweepers’ colony, where some eight hundred Harijans were living in squalor.

A second Simla Conference followed, and ended in a second

failure. It was not unexpected, was in fact only the necessary prelude to a British proposal. Having demonstrated once more the inability of the two main parties in British India to agree on procedure for the transfer of power, the Cabinet Mission must obviously put forward their own solution or return defeated, and with the certainty that serious disturbances would break out all over India, which had now waited four years for a decisive development.

The outstanding fact about the Cabinet Mission's document of May 1946 was that, like the Sapru non-party leaders' conference five months earlier, it unequivocally rejected Pakistan and determined to bring to birth a unitary India. Partition of the Punjab and Bengal "would be contrary to the wishes of a very large proportion of the inhabitants of those provinces". "There are weighty administrative, economic, and military considerations." "The case for a united defence is even stronger". In sum, "We are therefore unable to advise the British Government that the power which at present resides in British hands should be handed over to two entirely separate sovereign states." Instead they proposed a central government limited to certain minimum functions—from which economic planning and fundamental rights were missing—and the grouping of provincial administrations in three sub-federations, of which two would have been, in effect, the Eastern and Western halves of Mr. Jinnah's Pakistan. Where the Sapru moderates had denied the rights of secession or non-accession to States and Provinces, the Mission's plan allowed a Province to secede after ten years, so that it looked as though Jinnah could, after all, achieve his aim of partition. On the critical question of how far a province was compelled to enter a sub-federation in the first place the Mission's statements contained apparently contradictory assertions. Adherence of the States to the Indian Union was optional; paramountcy was to lapse with the transfer of power. But this ominous proposal was thrust into the background; the matter simply did not arise until the two main parties should have agreed to the constitution-making procedure on this basis. Only when they had done so could they hope to participate in a new interim Government.

Gandhi at first took a leading part in the discussions: rising at 4.30 a.m. he was sometimes talking with Lord Pethick-

Lawrence by 6.30 a.m. and at other times resuming conversations with him after his prayer meeting at night. As the first impetus was lost and signs of deadlock appeared, the strain on all concerned became severe. Like Gandhi himself, the elderly Lord Pethick-Lawrence came through the ordeal with flying colours, but even so strenuous and disciplined a worker as Sir Stafford Cripps had to spend some time receiving treatment in hospital, and was warned to go slower when he resumed his place in the team. In *Harijan*, Gandhi wrote; "Intrinsically, and as legally interpreted, the paper seems to me to be a brave and frank document. Nevertheless the official interpretation would be different from the popular. If it is so, and it prevails, it will be a bad omen."

The States accepted the Mission's proposal, and the Muslim League—denouncing the criticism of Pakistan, which they reaffirmed as 'the unalterable objective'—declared themselves willing to co-operate with the proposed Constituent Assembly for the express purpose of making progress towards a separate Muslim State, 'keeping in view' the opportunity and right of secession.

The deadlock about composition of an Interim Indian Government remained unbroken, and, realising that Congress could not accept Mr. Jinnah's demand that there should be no Muslim among their nominees, the Viceroy himself nominated a Cabinet of fourteen which did not contravene the Muslim leader's veto, but which was supposed to be a government of talents rather than of party representation. Gandhi, sensing that real agreement was completely lacking, declared himself very unhappy and from now on played a smaller part in the negotiations. In any case he had not regarded himself as a candidate either for the Government or for a place in the Constituent Assembly.

Congress rejected the proposed Interim Government, but adopted a resolution on the constitution-making plan in which they agreed to work through the Constituent Assembly, but only because "there was sufficient scope for enlarging and strengthening the Central authority and for fully ensuring the right of the Province to act according to its choice in regard to grouping..." In short, as Azad said in communicating the Congress decision to the Viceroy, "while adhering to our

views, we accept your proposals”.

Within a few hours Mr. Jinnah notified Muslim League acceptance of the offer to form an interim Government. But to his mortification the Mission declared the negotiations adjourned and appointed a temporary Caretaker Government of officials. Jinnah insisted that the Viceroy was “in honour bound to proceed forthwith with the formation of your Interim Government”,—that is to install a Muslim League and minorities Cabinet. But the Mission returned to England carrying what it regarded as ‘acceptances’ of the long-term plan, and for some weeks an ill-informed optimism reigned. The Muslim League put an end to it in July by reversing acceptance of the constitution-making plan and preparing for direct action. Mr. Jinnah declared they had been forced to hold a pistol, and another League spokesman said that they would “see to it that the Constituent Assembly is not held”. In the months that followed public opinion was agitated by discoveries of large quantities of knives and other weapons which seemed to show that in some quarters, at least, preparations were being made for planned violence.

No one could have expected Gandhi to acquiesce in any of these manoeuvres. In a speech at his evening prayer meeting on June 25, a few hours after the passing of the Congress resolution, he said that he had placed his doubts before the Working Committee and advised them to decide independently of him. For four or five days his mind “had been filled with vague misgiving”, for which he could give no detailed reasons. “Those whose function it is to give a lead to the country could not afford to be guided by another’s unreasoned instinct”, he said; he would tell them when he saw the light, but so long as darkness surrounded him nobody should follow him in it. When the All-India Congress Committee met a week later to ratify the resolution, he spoke in favour of participation in the Constituent Assembly, despite its defects. “The Constituent Assembly scheme looks like iron ore. We can convert it into pure gold by our own efforts.” But the transmutation of iron into gold could be achieved only through the fire of non-violence,

The respite could not long continue. Early in August the Congress adopted a resolution inviting the Muslim League to

resume co-operation in the constitution-making process. The Viceroy made it known to Mr. Jinnah that an interim Government would now be formed from those who accepted in substance the Cabinet Mission's plan and offered the League five of the fourteen seats, now or later, if they would withdraw their rejection of the long-term scheme. Jinnah remained obdurate, perhaps hoping that his refusal would prevent the formation of the interim Government—as Congress abstention had previously postponed formation of such a Government—but Lord Wavell proceeded to announce twelve names, a predominantly Congress Cabinet, headed by Pandit Nehru. Within five hours of the first public announcement the bitterness of communal Muslim resentment was revealed by a murderous attack on a non-League Muslim member of the new Government, Sir Shafa'at Ahmad Khan, who was stabbed seven times and left unconscious in the street.

On 2nd September the new Cabinet was sworn-in by the Viceroy, but earlier in the day five ministers visited Gandhi, at his hut in the sweepers' colony, and sought his blessing. That, in the heart of India, was the real inauguration, and although Gandhi was observing his day of silence, he blessed each member individually and gave them a written message urging ceaseless work to eradicate untouchability, to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity, to promote the cause of hand-weaving and to abolish the salt tax. "The door to *Purna Swaraj* has at last been opened," Gandhi told his prayer meeting the same night.

But he well knew how grave was the situation. Already there had been disturbances in Bombay and elsewhere; in Calcutta the worst riots in the history of British India had led to a orgy of slaughter for which the Muslim ministry was widely blamed. On all sides there was wild talk of drastic action. "We are not yet in the midst of civil war," Gandhi warned, "But we are nearing it. At present we are playing at it. War is a respectable term for goondaism (thuggery) practised on a mass or national scale." As always he commended non-violence first and last, encouraged Nehru to meet Jinnah and invite the League to share in the interim Government and the Constituent Assembly. Probably he still believed that the Muslim populations should be permitted to secede if they exercised their ultimate right of self-determination through a general ple-

biscite. But he could not conceive of such an event as other than a tragedy. He would have no hesitation in conceding the Muslim League demand for Pakistan, he wrote, if he could be convinced of its righteousness. "But I am firmly convinced that the Pakistan demand is not Islamic, and I have not hesitated to call it-sinful. Islam stands for unity and brotherhood of mankind, not for disrupting the oneness of the human family. Therefore those who want to divide India into possibly warring groups are enemies alike of India and Islam. They may cut me to pieces, but they cannot make me subscribe to something which I consider wrong."

Towards the end of October Mr. Jinnah accepted the open offer of five seats in the Cabinet. He did not enter the Government himself, but sent Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan and four others. The Viceroy reminded them that acceptance of the Constituent Assembly plan was "the basis for participation", and anticipated an early ratification by the League Council. But the League's decision to enter the Cabinet was purely tactical and did not imply the least concession on their part. The Muslim five at once declined to attend an informal meeting of the Cabinet called by Nehru, and it was reluctantly recognised on all sides that the Government was 'bi-partisan', or as the League paper *Dawn* more plainly put it, "Government of two nations, by two nations, for two nations". Gandhi had said at once that he was forced to wonder whether the Muslims had come into the Cabinet only to fight there also, and feared their action was not straightforward.

Six months of this sort of politics, with the country in a ferment of excitement and apprehension, could have only one outcome. The entry of the League nominees into the Cabinet almost coincided with a sudden outburst of mob-violence in East Bengal, which grew to terrible proportions in the days that followed. The Governor, flying over the area, reported "no general rising of Muslims against Hindus", but many villages were attacked by gangs who burned houses, looted and murdered, producing a mass panic in which tens of thousands of Hindu refugees fled westwards to find shelter in improvised camps set up by the provincial government.

Gandhi at once decided that his place was among the sufferers, "the fact that I go there will satisfy souls and may be of

some use." Would the Muslims listen to him? "I do not know. I do not go with any expectation nor have I the right to expect it. A man who goes to do his duty only expects to be given strength by God." At Calcutta he was halted by the deadly news of reprisals in Bihar, where the Hindu majority were terrorising and murdering the unfortunate Muslims in an attempt to exact revenge for the massacres in East Bengal, and to deter Muslims elsewhere from following suit. Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and other ministers hastened to Bihar. The Government would use the military if necessary, Nehru warned, but could not his countrymen understand that a lathi hurled at a neighbour was a lathi hurled at Gandhi? Gandhi, in Calcutta, reproached them too. "What you are reported to have done will never count as an act of bravery. For thousands to do to death a few hundreds is not bravery, it is worse than cowardice." He would not be deflected from his original purpose of proceeding to the riot areas of East Bengal, to live unprotected amidst the Muslim majority there and restore confidence and peace if he could. But he must also take his own share of the sins of Bihar. "I cannot rest till I have done some measure of penance. Predominantly for reasons of health I had to put myself on the lowest diet possible soon after my reaching Calcutta. That diet now continues as a penance after knowledge of the Bihar tragedy. This low diet will become a fast unto death if the erring Biharis have not turned over a new leaf.' As always, he must suffer in his own body in proportion to the suffering in the social body of India. Now that India was being torn in two by the dissensions and ambitions of her peoples, Gandhi also was being pulled asunder by the conflicting calls from Bengal and Bihar. He satisfied them both, at the inevitable price of voluntary suffering. As never before the unity of India was symbolized in the person of one man.

His presence and activities in Calcutta helped to bring about more normal conditions, and although he was more than once obliged to postpone his departure he was free at last to set out on the 'Do or Die Mission' to East Bengal. At Delhi he had watched the rift widen between the two great communities, had seen how powerless were the political manoeuvres on both sides to advance unity and peace. Now that communal madness had burst out in the direct action of mob violence, India



must reply through the direct action of individual satyagraha. "Do" here means Hindus and Muslims should learn to live together in peace and unity. Otherwise I should die in the attempt." So far from being irrelevant to the political crisis this was the only key to its solution. Gandhi understood intuitively that, if he succeeded in Bengal, Indian unity might yet survive. He had accepted the challenge of the disruptive forces at the point of most disastrous manifestation, and was under no delusion as to the magnitude and meaning of the struggle.

Gandhi first installed himself in a partially devastated house that had not been completely burned down, a symbol of all India. At the prayer meeting on the first day he said he found indescribable peace in the natural scenery around him, but that peace was missing from the faces of the men and women. "This fratricide is more awful than anything in my experience," he admitted, "this mutual slaughter has nonplussed me. I do not know how I can induce the two communities to live in peace and harmony again. I have come to Bengal to find a solution for the problem. Bengal is a big province. If the communal problem can be solved here, it will be solved elsewhere also. If I succeed here, I will go away from Bengal with a new lease of life. If not, I wish God to remove me from the earth".

"I am afraid you must give up all hope of my early returning, or returning at all, to the Ashram," he wrote, and although he had a picked group of companions it was no part of his plan that they should remain with him. "A habit of taking service from a particular individual is inconsistent with hard austerity," he reflected. So long he had lived amidst a number of associates but this challenge he must meet without their aid. The non-violence of the Congress had been after all no more than policy, non-violence of the weak, and now that freedom was in sight its hold on the mass mind and on the political leaders was almost gone. "Now is the time," his conscience told him. "If you want to know yourself, go forth alone."

So the volunteers were dispersed throughout the riot area, and Gandhi began to prepare himself for his task. He worked at his papers under the dim light of a lantern from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m., conducted a small prayer, drank eight ounces of warm water with an ounce of honey, worked for two hours more, reading, writing and interviewing, and then took eight ounces of

fruit juice. At 7.30 a.m. he walked for about an hour and a half along the village footpaths, gradually increasing speed and distance in preparation for the tour he was planning. After the walk he took a lengthy massage and a hot bath. At 11 a.m. he had his first full meal; eight ounces of goat's milk, boiled vegetable, thin chapatis and fruit, and conducted interviews while he ate. He slept for half an hour in the afternoon, awoke with clock-like precision, and drank about 12 ounces of cocoanut water. A mud pack on his stomach for half an hour, part of a nature cure, followed, spinning and talking to visitors, an evening prayer at 5 p.m. and a second walk. Then a further session of intensive work, a second meal like the first, and work again until any time between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. when he retired. He was working for the greater part of two ten-hour periods, divided by some four hours sleep at night, and the shorter mid-day break and siesta.

"The new basis," he said, "has to be built here in the villages where the Hindus and the Muslims have lived and suffered together on the land of their forefathers and must live together in the future. For the time being I have become a Bengali and a Noakhali man. I have come to live and share their task... For me, if this thing is pulled through it will be the crowning act of my life.... I don't want to return from Bengal in a defeatist way. I would rather die, if need be, at the hands of an assassin." He knew the danger; but at least he was to be spared the assassin in the villages that were for him the real India. That fate lurked ahead in the capital city, the political and symbolic centre of the influences that were transforming India, and were to turn at last upon the man who had opposed them with his whole life and his great soul.

Personally he would like to live for 125 years, he remarked, and afterwards increased the figure to 135. He could not bring himself to admit that the greater part of his life's service lay behind him. Whatever Gandhi had done in the past was, in his eyes, so much preparation for the more arduous and skilful service he must now go on to render. Unconquerable life glowed in Gandhi's small frame. But around him was darkness "of such a character that the like has never faced me before. It is indeed now a vital test that *ahimsa* is passing through". He could not find the way to communicate the non-violence of

his own inner life to the suspicious and revengeful peasants around him, any more than he had been able to fire his Congress colleagues to give it full expression in the fateful discussions at Delhi.

But he set off on his barefooted pilgrimage through the villages of the riot area, begging for Muslim hospitality wherever possible, speaking each day at meetings of all sizes, preaching the simple but profound truths of peace and brotherhood. It was no hardship to go unshod, he wrote. "The earth of Noakhali is like velvet and the green grass is a magnificent carpet to walk on. It reminds me of the soft English grass I noticed in England." Throughout January and February he walked on, and slowly but surely the whole atmosphere of the district began to improve. Had the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity been only a Bengal problem he would have been able to fulfil the whole of his mission, though Bengal was as large as many a European nation. But the Bengal problem had all-India significance because it was the pattern of the division with which all India was threatened, and its symptoms were paralleled in the worse massacres of Bihar and growing violence in the Punjab. Both inside and outside Bengal the people knew this, and Gandhi was obliged to realise that history would not afford him the time needed to complete his work in Bengal without intermission.

He had never for a moment ceased to watch the situation in Bihar and Delhi. Bi-partisan government at the centre was immediately and obviously a failure. During Gandhi's first weeks in East Bengal, in November, Nehru was impatiently asserting: "During the last few weeks there were many occasions when I was on the point of resigning. I do not know what may happen within a week, ten days, or a month." Mr. Jinnah, he said, had tried to get the Constituent Assembly adjourned *sine die*. But whether the Muslims came or not the Assembly would go on, and it would be prepared "to establish an independent republic". Mr. Jinnah was explicit: "No representative of the Muslim League will participate in the Constituent Assembly". Unless, of course, he was assured beforehand of the inclusion of the divided provinces in the Pakistan groupings.

London also had been anxiously following Gandhi's work in Bengal, as the true index of the communal problem, and

following also the deteriorating situation in Delhi. At the end of November the Prime Minister appealed to the Indian leaders to come to London for consultations. Nehru was at first unwilling. Was the opening of the Constituent Assembly on December 9 to be put off? Was the whole question of grouping to be reopened? In the state of the country it was unthinkable. But finally he came, with Patel and the Sikh leader, Baldev Singh, to meet the British Government and Mr. Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan. The London talks produced no larger measure of agreement, only an interpretation by the British of the original plan, in which they made it clear that the extreme Congress or extreme League attitude was contrary to the purposes of their scheme and would not be accepted as a basis for transfer of power. This was a worthy effort to compel co-operation in the Constituent Assembly; but it failed.

When the Constituent Assembly's first meeting took place on 9th December 1946 in the brightly-lit, high-domed library of the Council House at Delhi, the city in which Gandhi had endured his first long fast for Hindu-Muslim unity twenty-two years earlier, the Muslim League representatives were absent. Nehru moved a resolution to proclaim "an independent sovereign republic of India", and Gandhi, from the distant village of Sri-rampur, gave it his blessing. After a recess the Assembly adopted the resolution towards the end of January. The interim Congress had accepted as binding the London interpretation, but Mr. Jinnah was irreconcilable. At Karachi on January 31 the League declared that Congress had not accepted the basic plan of the Cabinet Mission and confirmed its own refusal to co-operate in the Assembly which, together with its sovereign Republic resolution, the League declared invalid and illegal, and demanded its summary dissolution. The Congress replied, in effect, that there was no justification for the presence in the interim Government of the Muslim League nominees, who in turn rejected the request for their resignations as 'presumptuous'.

To the British it seemed that partition was now inevitable, and most Indian politicians seem to have felt the same. The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, probably shared Gandhi's view that whether or not partition was inevitable was for Indians alone to decide after the departure of the British. In his inaugural address to the Central Legislature Wavell had said, "India is a

natural unit.. No man can alter geography." The Cabinet Mission had reached similar conclusions, and refused to recommend to the British Government transfer of power to two separate states. But Whitehall now changed its mind on this fateful issue, and Wavell—it is to be supposed—could not. His appointment was terminated and Viscount Mountbatten was installed as the last Viceroy. Simultaneously the Government announced its policy. Mr. Gandhi's Quit India policy of 1942 had become Mr. Attlee's Quit India policy in 1947, but with the terrible difference that India was to be split in two at the very instant of departure. Power would be transferred not later than June 1948. It was not yet openly stated that it would be handed over to two separate governments. Congress accepted the declaration early in March, interpreting it as proposing transfer of power to the Central Government, and insisting that "any Province or part of a Province which accepts the constitution and desires to join the Union cannot be prevented from doing so".

Gandhi had remained in Bengal during these critical weeks, but he knew that political developments were transforming the situation he was striving to remedy. Also, the Muslims of East Bengal had from the first insisted that if he was truly a communal peace-maker he must go personally to remonstrate with the Hindu majority in Bihar, where a far greater number of the minority community had been slaughtered. The Punjab was seething also and now that passions were again roused Gandhi saw that his work among the Muslims of Bengal could no longer advance unless he made at least a brief visit to Bihar. At the end of February, after nearly four months in Bengal, a message from Dr. Syed Mahmud decided him. He would go to Bihar, hoping to be absent only for a short time; for he could not foresee how the situation might develop in East Bengal, where realisation of the probability of partition was now beginning to spread. His faithful volunteers would remain to carry on the work until he returned.

Thirteen years before, Gandhi had toured the earthquake area of Bihar, but to him the recent disturbances were something infinitely more terrible. At Patna he was surrounded by enormous crowds, so that he had to proceed to his first prayer meeting in a motor car, for which he apologised, and next evening

came on foot through a passage lined with women volunteers. This was a more orderly meeting; already he was teaching them to be peaceful. But his mission was not so much in Patna as in the villages. On the third evening Gandhi said to his prayer meeting: "Because my thoughts reach tonight only those brothers and sisters who have perhaps no direct influence upon the rioters, I have been seriously thinking if I should not march from village to village in the manner of Noakhali, so that what little power my thoughts contain might be conveyed directly to the most distant villager who has done a wrong to his brother Muslim." But he did not want to be three months away from Bengal and he soon decided to tour the villages that could be reached by car, and to return to Patna each night. As he watched crowds of sturdy men pursuing him, catching hold of his car and shouting vociferously 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai', he told the refugees in one of the relief camps: "I could well imagine the havoc they must have wrought when they attacked a handful of Muslims. The Hindus should be ashamed of the act. Nor should they think of taking revenge for the incidents of the Punjab or the like." "The departure from the straight path of non-violence they had made at times in 1942 was very probably responsible for the aberration," he told other meetings. "The only effective alternative to it is the way of non-violence. Bihar had a lesson of it in Champaran in 1917."

In Bihar his presence again produced a substantial improvement and raised large sums for the relief of the pitiful hordes of refugees, but in Bihar too the problem was only part of the whole crisis of India. From East Bengal came messages that the situation was deteriorating; would he not return to them as he had promised? Urgent appeals came from the Punjab that he should go there to help in restoration of peace; he had helped Bengal and Bihar—was not the Punjab now the greatest danger area? He could not see his way to go, he told a village audience in Bihar, he hoped that his voice would reach the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Punjab. But after six weeks 'tireless' work in Bihar he felt it imperative to pay a flying visit to Delhi. He had reluctantly refused a request from Jawaharlal Nehru that he should come to take part in the important Inter-Asian Relations conference that had been summoned to meet in the capital; but when the new Viceroy Viscount Mountbatten,

expressed a personal wish to meet him he felt he must go. Mountbatten's invitation was undoubtedly intended to make it possible for him to participate in the Asian Relations Conference, as well as representing a sincere desire to hear and consider Gandhi's view of the whole Indian situation.

Gandhi spoke to the Asian Relations Conference on 2nd April. His mind was still fixed on the villages of Bengal and Bihar. If they wanted to see the real India, he said, they must go to the villages. "If some of you see the villages, you will not be fascinated by the sight. You will have to scratch below the dung heap. I do not pretend to say that they were ever places of paradise. Today they are really dung-heaps. They were not like that before. What I speak is not from history but from what I have seen myself. I have travelled from one end of India to the other and have seen the miserable specimens of humanity with lustreless eyes. They are India. In these humble cottages, in the midst of these dung-heaps, are to be found the humble *bhangis* in whom you find the concentrated essence of wisdom."

It was that wisdom they should discover and value. "What I want you to understand is the message of Asia. It is not to be learnt through the Western spectacles or by imitating the atom bomb. If you want to give a message to the West, it must be the message of love and the message of truth. I do not want merely to appeal to your head. I want to capture your heart. In this age of democracy, in this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor, you can re-deliver this message with the greatest emphasis. You will complete the conquest of the West not through vengeance because you have been exploited, but with real understanding. I am sanguine if all of you put your hearts together—not merely heads—to understand the secret of the message these wise men of the East have left to us, and if we really become worthy of that great message, the conquest of the West will be completed. This conquest will be loved by the West itself."

He had answered some questions asked by the Conference. Did he believe in the theory of one world, someone wanted to know? "I will not like to live in this world if it is not to be one", he answered. "Certainly I should like to see this dream realised in my lifetime." Behind his dream of a united India

was always that dream of a united world. The discipline of Swadeshi might lead him to direct his efforts to his immediate personal, local and national environment; but through the nation he sought to appeal to the world.

At one of the village prayer meetings in East Bengal, Gandhi had explained the evolution of his Service. The Sanskrit part had been adopted during his stay with C.F. Andrews at Tagore's community, Shantiniketan, during the early days after his return to India; the first verse of the *Ishopanishad* had been added during his Harijan tour in Travancore twenty years later; the daughter of Abbas Tyabji had proposed the inclusion of a favourite passage from the *Koran*, and on Kasturbai's death at the Aga Khan's palace, Dr. Gilder had recited a passage from Zoroastrian scriptures which had thereafter become part of the Ashram prayer; a Japanese monk who lived at Sevagram for two or three years had been responsible for adding the Japanese *Salutation to the Enlightened Ones*. Such a prayer, Gandhi taught, belonged to no single community or religion. It was of universal appeal, and no one, whatever his denomination may be, should have hesitation in sharing it. "I have advanced," he said, "from tolerance to equal respect for all religions."

In Delhi now he found even tolerance lacking among some of those who were inflamed by the drift of India toward partition, and recognising this too as symbolic of the whole problem he met it with a new gesture. On the first night in Delhi an excited Hindu youth objected to the recitation from the *Koran*. Gandhi deferred to the minority of one and omitted the whole composite prayer, hoping to teach the youth that his supposed victory was really the loss of the entire audience who wanted the whole prayer. On the second evening Gandhi began by asking if there were any objectors. Two or three replied that they opposed the recitation from the *Koran*, and again Gandhi submitted. On the third evening he put his question again and several people objected, with the same result. On the fourth evening a member of the Hindu Mahasabha replied to Gandhi's question with an apology for the occurrences of the past three days. The only objector present then withdrew his objection and in this temple of the untouchables the full prayer was held. Gandhi told his listeners that these lowly sweepers were his younger brothers; he was a *bhangi* and it was the duty of a true



*bhangi*, and therefore a true Hindu to cleanse not only the dirt of the body but also all the pollution of the mind and the spirit. The true Hindu saw Truth in every religion. On the next evening when Gandhi asked, "Is there anyone amongst this gathering who would rather I did not conduct the customary prayer?" there were no objectors, and his heart was glad. The little satyagraha had succeeded, for the time at any rate.

To those who thought he was preoccupied with major political issues, and had forgotten the suffering areas he said : "God alone knows how my heart weeps and what agony I suffer at the madness the people indulged in at Noakhali, Bihar and now in the Punjab. I am working for those areas wherever I am, even in my talks with the Viceroy. There is no bigger task for me than to strive for Hindu-Muslim unity. I could not serve India if I forgot Noakhali. I claim to be a servant of God. I neither eat nor drink nor do anything else except at God's bidding. You will, perhaps, understand my work better in the fulness of time. Meanwhile I must continue my duty wherever God takes me."

He could never forget Noakhali. As the Bengali *bhajan* was sung on the sixth evening at Delhi, the vistas of Noakhali came before his eyes. The news from Noakhali was bad. Three wires during his first week in Delhi told the story of rising communal fury. "Yesterday's case happened at Mohammadpur in Ramganj Thana," read one of the messages. "It was an attempt to burn alive three families consisting of 22 persons, male, female, children of the house who for safety slept all in one room. This room was fastened from outside and this thatched hut and other huts of the house were simultaneously set on fire. The inmates escaped by breaking through the mat wall." One night at his prayer meeting—they were no longer interrupted by objections—Gandhi spoke of the gallant friends he had left behind him in the villages of East Bengal. They were now at the Do or Die Mission, scattered in different villages: Satish Babu and his wife, the faithful Pyarelal, Haran Babu, the physically frail Amtul Salaam, Sushila Pai and twenty-one year old Abha (wife of Kanu Desai), Sushila Nayyar. All unafraid, Gandhi said proudly. They reported to him that the situation was worsening, their own danger was plain. But so far, they said, all the Hindus were

brave and willing to die if necessary without killing. They felt this was the result of all their endeavours during the past months. They assured him that they did not ask or expect his return.

On the initiative of the Viceroy, Gandhi put his name with Jinnah's to a joint appeal to the communities "to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder", and to avoid the incitement of such acts. Not everybody understood. One letter he received was addressed to Mohammed Gandhi, though he probably regarded the intended insult as nothing of the kind. Others taunted him with failure to go to the Punjab, and he replied that nothing would stop him from going to the Punjab when the inner call came. But he would stay no longer in Delhi, despite the probability of major political developments. Bengal he would entrust for the time being to Pyarelal and his heroic volunteers. He himself must return to Bihar to take up his interrupted work there. After a fortnight in Delhi he was impatient to be back at Patna. Patel asked him when he would return to Delhi and he answered, "Whenever you send for me."

Yet he could not spare himself responsibility for Noakhali. In Calcutta on his way there in November he had warned Bihar that he must fast if the bloodshed there went on. Now in Patna again he gave the same warning to Bengal: "Since by going to Bihar while my work in Noakhali was still unfinished I have earned the right of fasting against the misdeeds in Noakhali." For two weeks he worked steadily in Bihar, exhausted by the unceasing efforts of the past months and the hot weather, and then at the end of April came another urgent call from Delhi. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted him there at once.

Again his work was interrupted, and the pattern was becoming plain. Gandhi was needed everywhere and all the time if the unity of India was to be saved. He knew it well enough. The creed of non-violence was for the people, there must be Gandhis everywhere. But there were not; and like some god Gandhi was trying to metamorphose himself into a dozen shapes and be in a hundred places at once. For one man it was an impossible task; but it is enough to put manhood into the most hopeless weakling to remember that one man, nearing eighty and fully aware that he was attempting the impossible, never-

theless attempted it. He went to Delhi. He talked to his Congress friends, he talked again with the Viceroy, he had his first substantial conference with Mr. Jinnah since the abortive talks of September 1944. The published statement was not agreed: it was "by Mr. Jinnah with the approval of Mr. Gandhi". "We discussed...the question of the division of India into Pakistan and Hindustan, and Mr. Gandhi does not accept the principles of division...." The discussion with Jinnah made Gandhi late for the prayer meeting, and in his absence at Bihar the unity of the meeting which he had built up had broken down. The solitary objector to the Koran was there again. Gandhi was only in Delhi ten days on this occasion, and had no time to repeat the miniature satyagraha. But he found occasion to read out a Hindi translation of the Koranic verse to which objection had been taken, so that there should be no room for misunderstanding:

"In order to escape from the evil one I seek refuge in God.  
Oh God, I begin every task with the remembrance of  
Thy God.

Thou art the compassionate and the merciful.

Thou art the Creator of the universe.

Thou art Lord and Master.

I praise Thee alone and desire only Thy help.

Thou wilt mete out justice on the Day of judgement.

Show me the right path, the path which Thy saints have trod,  
not the wrong path of those who have offended Thee.

God is one.

He is eternal, all-powerful, uncreate.

There is none other like Him. He has created all things.

None has created Him.

The next call was from Calcutta. He arrived there on 9th May on which day a spokesman told the Calcutta press that "the Congress Working Committee have, with a deep sense of sorrow, become reconciled to the division of India. Events have taken such a turn that division has become inevitable". That raised also the question of partitioning Bengal. The militant Congress dated its birth from the beginning of the century when the British had sought to partition Bengal and the Indians had fiercely opposed and prevented it. Now the nationalist

movement was accepting the inevitability of partition as the price of success in the struggle for independence. Gandhi did not accept it. In his prayer meeting the same night he referred to the document on non-violence jointly signed by Jinnah and himself. That at once imposed on him, he said, the duty of fasting unto death if either the Hindus or the Muslims descended to the level of savages or beasts. Let the Hindus of Bihar and the Muslims of Noakhali remember the fact. As to partition of Bengal, that mainly rested with the Muslims; but if he were Premier Suhrawardy he would invite the Hindus to partition his body before they thought of partitioning Bengal.

Five days later he was back at Patna again. He had not foreseen his visit to Calcutta, he told the prayer meeting. His Do or Die vow was taken only for Noakhali and Bihar. But what he heard from Calcutta made him feel that he might be of some use there. And he could say that he had not been entirely unsuccessful. In Calcutta also he was serving Bihar. For the cause was the same.

Ten days later he was once more in Delhi, in answer to another call from Nehru. Both Nehru and Patel had retired from the sweltering heat of Delhi for a short rest and change, and Gandhi was urged to do so too. He had deprived himself of the help of his usual staff, had been overworking for months and had become, his friends warned him, reckless with regard to his health and life. But he would not rest: "The Hindus and Muslims of Noakhali and Bihar must first assure me that they no longer require my services. Then alone will I think of going elsewhere for rest." He had little hope of such assurances, for the division of India was widening day by day. "In India as I see it shaping today there is no place for me," he said. "I have given up the hope of living 125 years. I might last a year or two. That is a different matter. But I have no wish to live if India is to be submerged in a deluge of violence, as it is threatening to do." To a former member of his Ashram he wrote: "I am in the midst of flames. Is it the kindness of God or His irony that the flames do not consume me?" To an American friend he wrote. "I am the same as when you saw me except that my faith burns, if possible, brighter than before."

Viscount Mountbatten had been called back to London in

the middle of May for final consultations on the statement that was to be made at the beginning of June on the terms for transfer of power. Partition was generally regarded as certain, and Mr. Jinnah even demanded a corridor through Hindustan to connect the two groups of Pakistan Provinces, a proposal that in saner times would have been recognised as the *reductio ad absurdum* of his separatist claims. It was not for the British to give liberty, Gandhi argued. Britain's function was not to change the map of India, only to withdraw and leave India to carry on in an orderly fashion if she could, if not in chaos. He reminded the nation of the joint statement issued by Jinnah and himself: "If in the teeth of that document the country continues on a mad career of violence of the worst kind, and the British power is weak enough to submit to it in the vain hope that after the mad thirst is quenched things will run smooth, it would have left a bloody legacy for which not only India but the whole world will blame her."

"If Muslims become mad and say 'either give us Pakistan or we will use the sword,' he told his prayer meeting, "then I will say, and every one of you if you are brave should say, that we shall not give you Pakistan. You can cut me into pieces and cut the country into pieces later on. If you are brave enough to say that, then God will break their sword."

As the clocks were striking ten on the morning of June 2, the Indian political leaders arrived at the Viceroy's house to hear the terms. Gandhi did not go with them. But an hour before his prayer meeting he was summoned by telephone for an interview with the Viceroy, and this may explain why his first comment was guarded; it was, however, quite clear that he disapproved of the plan, as he was bound to do. It provided for the partition of Bengal and the Punjab, as well as the partition of India, although responsibility was rightly left on the Indian politicians to vote either for unity or division. On the next evening Gandhi appealed to Mr. Jinnah to call a conference of Congress and the other Indian parties to find a solution independent of the British. No doubt he made the appeal because he believed that was the right step for Mr. Jinnah to take, not because he thought it likely that Jinnah would respond. But the essence of Gandhi's reaction to the situation was that it took two parties to make a partition. "Mr. Jinnah

claims there are two nations," he said on another evening, "but I declare that India is only one nation. I am a citizen of Pakistan as much as of Hindustan." Beyond that personal attitude he was unable to go, for the sufficient reason that the Congress Working Committee had accepted the plan. He could not fast in the name of India, for India had chosen, otherwise. "If Congress commits an act of madness does it mean that I should die?" Rather than fast in anger, he would watch and pray.

When the All-India Congress Committee met a few days later, Pandit Nehru said that "India's heart had been broken", and that he was wholly responsible for acceptance of the British statement. Maulana Azad did not think that the decision of the Working Committee had been right, but admitted that the Congress had no alternative. Gandhi said he was one of those who steadfastly opposed the division of India. Yet he would urge the A.I.C.C. to accept the resolution. He was accepting the fact that they did not accept him as their guide. "I admit," he said, "whatever has been accepted is not good. But I am confident that good will certainly emerge out of it." The Congress President, Kripalani, in his concluding speech, said that Gandhi had not been able to show the way of combating communal strife in a non-violent manner as he had done in the case of fighting the British. Gandhi had said that he was groping in the dark, and though he said that he was solving the Hindu-Muslim problem for the whole of India by his work in Noakhali and Bihar, the President had not been able to understand how the technique could be applied on a mass scale. That was why he was not standing with Gandhi that day and had agreed to the partition of India. Gandhi answered that his groping in the dark referred to the fact that he did not know how to make the people see his viewpoint. He had no doubt that non-violence was as effective a weapon against communal strife as it had proved in their struggle against the British. The people had followed him then, because they knew they could not face the might of British arms in any other way. It was the non-violence of the weak. That would not serve the purpose in communal strife. For that pure non-violence of the brave was required. To his prayer meeting Gandhi added later that while he admitted his impotency regarding the spread of ahimsa

of the brave and the strong as distinguished from that of the weak, the admission was not meant to imply that he did not know how that inestimable virtue was to be cultivated. Consciousness of the living presence of God within was undoubtedly the first requisite. It was not only Gandhi's non-violence that the Congress had dropped. Nehru had spoken of the need for rapid industrialisation of India, and when he presented the new flag of India to the Constituent Assembly, amid cheers and loud cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai', the spinning-wheel had given place to the wheel of Asoka. Sarojini Naidu tried to soften the blow by saying that it represented the Charkha of Gandhi as well. Gandhi contented himself with the criticism, staggering to his colleagues, that "the retention of the Union Jack for such period as India was a Dominion was a point of honour", and it should have been given a place in the national flag !

Nearly all the letters Gandhi now received were full of abuse. At the end of July he commented on the criticism that his speeches were depressing, and the suggestion that he should not speak at all. "It is true that I do not agree with what many of my closest friends have done or are doing. . . . If you analyse them you would find only one fundamental difference to which all the others could be traced. Non-violence is my creed. It never was of the Congress. . . . All that you and I need to realise is that the Congress practice is not non-violent today in the accepted sense of the term. If the Congress was pledged to the policy of non-violence, there would be no army supported by it. But she supports an army which may eat up the civilians and establish military rule in India unless the people listen to me. Am I to give up all hope of their ever listening to me? I cannot do it whilst there is breath left in me. . . . If we knew the use of non-violent resistance, which only those with hearts of oak can offer, we would present to the world a totally different picture of free India instead of an India cut in twain, one part highly suspicious of the other, and the two too much engaged in mutual strife to be able to think cogently of the food and clothing of the hungry and naked millions who know no religion but that of the one and only God who appears to them in the guise of the necessities of life." That was still his message to the world too. "I can say with confidence that if the

world is to have peace, non-violence is the means to that end and no other."

But before the end of June he was already unhappy at his continued stay in Delhi. He was torn between several conflicts, he said. "I feel that Bihar is calling me, so is Noakhali where I had commenced work among the riot-affected refugees and tried to specialise in the work. When a month ago I left Patna, I was under the impression that I would return to Bihar inside of a week. But events have taken place during the month in such quick succession that perhaps a generation has been packed into a month. So I am vegetating in New Delhi hoping that thereby I am serving both Bihar and Noakhali. Then I fancy that the Punjab is also calling me. I see no guiding star unmistakably telling me which way to take. I therefore go by the saying that gripped me years ago—'When in doubt stay where you are'."

At the end of July he was persuaded by Jawaharlal Nehru to go to Kashmir. A year earlier the popular movement in that predominantly Muslim principality had come into collision with the Hindu Maharaja's Government, and the people's leader, Sheikh Abdullah who favoured not Pakistan but self-determination, was arrested. Nehru had then sent a letter to the Maharaja, carried by the secretary of the States Peoples' Conference, and when this messenger was arrested, had gone himself. Forces were sent to intercept him and when he pressed forward in an unarmed crowd he received a slight injury in the cheek, and was himself arrested and detained for two days. Three months later Abdullah was sentenced to three years simple imprisonment and a fine of over £ 100, on the charge of sedition. Kashmir was demonstrating the determination of the stronger Princes to stand for no interference from the nationalists of British India. Nehru had two purposes now. Gandhi's presence in Kashmir would undoubtedly encourage and inspire the people; and if he could be persuaded to stay a fortnight in these beautiful surroundings, the rest and change of scene would give him some respite from the wearing labours of the past nine months. Gandhi agreed to stay a fortnight if there was time, but instead left Delhi on the night of July 30, reached Kashmir on the evening of August 1, used up every minute of the next three days in conversations and prayer meet-



ing, and left on the morning of August 4, having seen nothing of Kashmir but the road by which he travelled, and the inside of the house where he lodged. Now that he was so near the Punjab he had determined to see for himself the refugees from the west of that province who had fled in anticipation of persecution and mob-violence, which they expected on August 15, when partition took effect.

To the nine thousand refugees in the camp at Wah he explained his work in Kashmir. He had made up his mind not to hold any public meetings, but the wife of Sheikh Abdullah had been with him throughout the three days, and he was able to talk with other local leaders, although he could not see the imprisoned Sheikh. He had seen the Maharaja and Maharani, and the Prime Minister, and his public prayer meetings in Kashmir and Jammu had been attended by thousands. On August 15, Kashmir would become legally independent, but it would not remain in that condition for long afterwards. It had to join either the Union or Pakistan. As to the fears of the refugees, he hoped they were unfounded. If not, it would be the beginning of the ruin of Islam. "If it had been possible he would have stayed with them until after August 15, but he could not put off his departure for Noakhali. Instead he left them one of his faithful helpers, Dr. Sushila Nayyar, who had been with him in Noakhali, and had to some extent taken Pyarelal's place since he had been left with the other volunteers in East Bengal.

Now that the partition of Bengal as well as the Punjab was about to take place he must defend the Hindu minority of Bengal against a possible recurrence of the terrorism of nine months before. By 9th August he had made the thousand mile journey and was in Sodepur, a suburb eight miles from Calcutta, on the last lap to his destination—Noakhali, which he had left only five months earlier, although a whole life-time of work and care seemed to lie between. But he was fated never to revisit Noakhali. Calcutta was now the storm centre of Bengal and while the Government in Delhi tried to cope with the growing menace of the partitioned Punjab, Gandhi in Calcutta had to bring peace out of the inferno of partitioned Bengal.

In Calcutta it was feared that on August 15, when West Bengal passed from the Muslim League government of the last

two years which was held largely responsible for the terrible riots in Calcutta—to a Congress ministry, there would be a day of Hindu vengeance on the Muslims who made up nearly a quarter of the city's population. On the evening of August 9, Gandhi quietened an enormous crowd at his prayer meeting with almost miraculous ease. Amid perfect silence he told them that he had planned to go to Noakhali the next day. Owing to the pressure from many Muslim friends he had decided to stay and see if he could contribute his share to the return of sanity. He had at the same time said that if he did not go to Noakhali and any mishap took place there, his life would become forfeit as he had said already about Bihar. He was putting a fast to death in the scales against communal madness, even now that the partition of Bengal and the Punjab—which brought home to the masses of those provinces, and to all India, the full truth of Gandhi's warning that large-scale bloodshed was almost inevitable. Gandhi was making his last great bid to preserve the unity of India by throwing his life into the balance. Few acts of heroism in history are comparable to what he attempted, few tragedies more poignant than his success in the East of India that was undone in the West of India, despite all that his old friends and colleagues could do. While he staked all on non-violence and won, they would not trust the fate of India to non-violence and failed.

On the evening of August 13 Gandhi took up residence in a deserted Muslim house in one of the slum areas of Calcutta where the Muslims were already being terrorised. The Muslim Premier, Suhrawardy, accepted an invitation to share the hut with him, as a symbol of communal unity. Gandhi was met by an angry crowd of young Hindus crying: "Gandhi, go back !" and as he did not stir from the hut they began later the same evening to hurl bricks through the windows. Gandhi invited some of them in to talk to him.

That night the miracle of Calcutta began. On the evening of the fourteenth news came of spontaneous demonstrations of friendship between the communities all over the city. "Calcutta's riot centres turned to celebrations tonight as darkness fell on India's last day of British rule," cabled Reuter. "Wildly enthusiastic mixed parties of Hindus and Muslims drove slowly round the city in all sorts of vehicles from jeeps to heavy lorries

roaring their joint welcome to the nation's independence. Since dusk the city has echoed to the cheers of Hindus and Muslims. Storm centres of the recent rioting are alive with celebrations. No communal incident has been reported to the police during the day. Muslim buildings are flying the Hindustan flag." Gandhi had shown that his vision of a united India could be made real. During the days that followed the celebrations continued, the Hindus joining in the Muslim Id festival, rowdies of the first night replacing the police as guards around the hut in which Gandhi and Suhrawardy were living.

The hour of India's freedom had come. In a solemn message to the nation Nehru said: "On this day our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the father of our nation, who embodying the old spirit of India held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surrounded us. We have often been unworthy followers of his and have strayed from his message, but not only we, but succeeding generations will remember this message and bear the imprint in their hearts of this great son of India, magnificent in his faith and strength, and courage and humility." As the hour of midnight struck, the trumpet rang out to herald the new era; despite Nehru's words it was not the era that Gandhi had worked for, the era of Swaraj in which the self-government of a non-violent nation was rooted in the self-government of non-violent men and women. India was to learn soon enough that it could not set aside Gandhi's vision in its political practice and at the same time retain him as father of the State. Mountbatten also called him the architect of India's freedom through non-violence, and that was true. He had given Indian freedom; hers was the responsibility for using it non-violently and well, or using it as nations have almost always done, for limited and selfish ends that must be defended by violence.

Before the sound of the trumpet died away, the massacres in the Punjab began, and as the days passed the number of terror-stricken refugees fleeing from Pakistan eastwards, and westwards from the East Punjab, grew by hundreds of thousands, until two million people were on the move, mercilessly attacked and butchered as they fled. By the beginning of September thirty thousand refugees had reached Delhi to inflame the people with their tales of plunder and atrocity, and to fill to overflowing

the improvised camps, the houses of the Muslims who had fled the city and even the mosques. A single column of 400,000 people, stretching over sixty miles, a terrible procession of miserable humanity struggling eastwards towards the capital.

Calcutta was unaffected at first by the grim news. Six days of continued peace after August 15th enabled the authorities to withdraw all curfew restrictions which had been enforced in some districts for a year. Gandhi and Suhrawardy were busy touring the city, speaking at one danger point after another. "Hindus and Mulsims are today sitting together through God's will and Mr. Gandhi's grace," said Suhrawardy. The decisive question for Gandhi now was, how soon dare he leave for the Punjab? At the end of August he resolved to go, the news from the Punjab brooked no delay, and although he felt his task in Calcutta was not finished he must take the risk. As he prepared to leave, there was a sudden wave of violence in the city, including many murders. The *Manchester Guardian* correspondent declared: "It can hardly be doubted that the whole thing was planned by some group that was not really reconciled to the idea of good intercommunal relations." With ill-tidings flooding in from the Punjab, the fresh outbreak was a spark in a powder magazine, and Gandhi instantly cancelled his departure and began a fast which was to end only if and when peace was securely restored. If anyone had doubted that his presence in Calcutta and peace were simple cause and effect, they doubted it no longer.

Despite the wide scale of the outbreak, the city did not relapse into panic; fraternisation continued and a number of revolvers, sten guns, rifles and bombs were surrendered to Gandhi by young men who stated they had been used in the disturbances; communal leaders came together and solemnly resolved to take responsibility for maintaining peace: and after three days, when reports from all over the city indicated that all had been quiet for a complete day, the fast was broken. Gandhi agreed to end it only when the communal leaders recognised that they must stake their lives on the continuation of peace in the city after he was gone. It is probable he would have gone farther with the ordeal but for the imperative necessity of going at the first possible moment to the Punjab. Even now he might be too late to control the calamity there, and in his absence no

one among the national leaders was even attempting satyagraha. The Border Force could not agree among themselves and had to be divided; partition could hardly go farther. But at least the miracle of Calcutta, as it was widely called, was confirmed. When Gandhi left for the Punjab on September 7, he left behind a city of peace, which remained peaceful during the convulsions that shook India in the succeeding months. Gandhi had won the battle of the Eastern Front. "It may fairly be claimed," wrote the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, "that this great effort to bring peace to Bengal—a province where it was alleged a few years ago that Mr. Gandhi had no appreciable influence—is the crowning act of a life devoted to peace-making.... Whether he can repeat the achievement of Calcutta remains to be seen. If he fails, he may well die in the attempt. But at the moment he seems to be all the stronger in mind and body from his Calcutta experiences."

They unveiled his portrait in the Constituent Assembly Hall, they hung it in India House in London, they proposed to erect a gigantic statue of him at Bombay, akin to the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour. They praised and did not follow. "I must dissent emphatically from any proposal to spend any money on preparing a statue for me," Gandhi wrote, "more especially at a time when people do not have enough food and clothing. In Bombay the beautiful insanitation reigns. There is so much overcrowding that poor people are packed like sardines. Wise use of ten lacs of rupees will consist in its being spent on some public utility. That would be the best statue. Money thus wisely spent will make an adequate return. Imagine how many hungry mouths would be filled if the amount was spent on growing more food crops."

"When on 9th September I returned to Delhi from Calcutta It was to proceed to West Punjab," he recalled some months later. "But that was not to be. Gay Delhi looked like a city of the dead. As I alighted from the train I observed gloom on every face I saw. Even Sardar Patel, whom humour and the joy that humour gives never desert, was no exception this time. The cause of it I did not know. He was on the platform to receive me. He lost no time in giving me the sad news of the disturbances that had taken place in the metropolis of the Union. At once I saw I had to be in Delhi and do or die." Delhi was

inflamed by the thirty thousand terrified and vengeful refugees. Already there had been a thousand killings in the city. In the Punjab the figure could not be less than fifteen times as great, and was probably much higher. Nothing could be done unless exemplary calm could be restored in the capital, and to that task Gandhi gave himself. On September 11 he went about the city, visiting a number of refugee camps, without an armed escort. Out of ninety-four casualties admitted to Delhi hospitals on that day, forty-two had bullet wounds.

Gandhi was staying this time at Birla house, but his heart was with the wretched refugees. "During the night as I heard what should have been the soothing sound of gentle life-giving rain, my mind went out to the thousands of refugees lying about in the open camps in Delhi. I was sleeping smugly in a verandah protecting me on all sides. But for the cruel hand of man against his brother, these thousands of men, women and children would not be shelterless and in many cases foodless. In some places they could not but be knee-deep in water. Was it all inevitable? The answer from within was an emphatic No."

They must not be spellbound by the spectacle of the atrocities committed on their own people in Pakistan, he warned, "Those who seek justice must do justice, must have clean hands. Let the Hindus and the Sikhs take the right step and invite the Muslims who have been driven out of their homes to return. If they can take this courageous step worthy from every point of view, they immediately reduce the refugee problem to its simplest terms. They will command recognition from Pakistan, nay from the whole world. They will save Delhi and India from disgrace and ruin. For me, transfer of millions of the Hindus and the Sikhs and the Muslims is unthinkable. It is wrong. The wrong of Pakistan will be undone by the right of a resolute non-transfer of population. I hope I shall have the courage to stand by it, even though mine may be the solitary voice in its favour." Meanwhile he appealed for blankets and other relief commodities for the refugees from Pakistan, and repeated the appeal tirelessly during the months that followed.

He did not want to stay in Delhi a moment longer than was necessary. "I was proceeding to the Punjab in order to make the Muslims undo the wrong that they were said to have per-

petrated there. But I could not hope for success unless I can secure justice for the Muslims in Delhi. They have lived in Delhi for generations. If the Hindus and the Muslims of Delhi will begin to live as brothers once again, I will proceed to the Punjab and do or die in Pakistan. The condition for success is that those in the Union should keep their hands clean." "I know that you are anxious that I should go to the Punjab at the earliest moment," he said on another evening. "I want to do so. But if I fail in Delhi it is impossible for me to succeed in Pakistan. For I want to go to all the parts and provinces of Pakistan under the protection of no escort save God. I will go as a friend of the Muslims as of others. My life would be at their disposal. I hope that I would cheerfully die at the hands of anyone who chose to take my life. Then I would have done as I advised all to do."

On October 2, his seventy-eighth birthday was celebrated in every town and city, and in the remote villages. Money and messages flooded in, and the stream of callers was unceasing; the refugees sent him flowers. Gandhi had been ill, though he tried to keep the news from the public. Now he asked himself whether condolences would not be more appropriate than congratulations. There was nothing but agony in his heart. Time was when whatever he said the masses followed. Today his was a lone voice. Many friends hoped he would live to be 125, but he had lost all desire to live long, let alone 125 years. He could not live while hatred and killing marred the atmosphere. The birthday celebrations were honoured all over the world. At Nanking the Chinese Ambassador to India said, "All in all, Mahatma Gandhi is what we call *Shen Hsuing*—that is sage and hero in one person." At Geneva, Mr. Karmarkar, speaking at a meeting organised by the Indo-Swiss Friendship Association, said: "He belongs as much to the world as to India. His love knows no barrier but encompasses all mankind. He strives for 'peace and goodwill', not only in India, but in the whole world. He has enabled India to achieve freedom, and I humbly think that if humanity seeks to achieve real peace and freedom as visualised by the United Nations, it must needs hearken to his message of Truth and Non-Violence." His old colleague and adviser, the Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, now Minister for Health, broadcast to India: "Was he not a veritable prophet when

he wrote in 1909 that 'Germany and England are living in the Hall of Death?' and she added: "There is not a shadow of doubt in my mind that if we had truly understood his message, *all* of us, without any reference to caste, class or creed, we would not today be in the sorry plight in which we find ourselves."

Gandhi named the thought that lurked in every mind. The calamity towards which India was drifting was war. The disaster of the Punjab, the miseries of the emigrant millions on both sides of the blood-sodden frontier, added terrible bitterness to the dangerous struggle between the two Dominions for possession of Kashmir. The country was invaded by Muslim tribesmen, without opposition from Pakistan. Sheikh Abdullah was free again, but unable to stem the tide. The Maharaja fled to safety. India hesitated and then replied with an expeditionary force which arrived only just in time to stem the advance on the Kashmir capital. But no one had dared openly to speak of war. When Gandhi warned Pakistan that if the situation continued, war between the Dominions was inevitable he was accused of inciting India to a war of conquest, to undo by military force the partition he had always opposed. "I hold that not a single mention of war in my speeches can be interpreted to mean that there was any incitement to, or approval of, war between Pakistan and the Union unless mere mention of it is to be taboo . . .," he replied. "India knows, the world should, that every ounce of my energy has been, and is being devoted, to the definite avoidance of fratricide culminating in war. When a man vowed to non-violence as the law governing human beings dares to refer to war, he can only do it so as to strain every nerve to avoid it. Such is my fundamental position from which I hope never to swerve even to my dying day."

But "it is no secret," he wrote in *Harijan* in November, "that the Congress willingly said goodbye to non-violence when it accepted power." "My audience will remember that I have repeatedly said that I have no influence in the matter over my friends in the Union Cabinet," he said, discussing the Kashmir danger at his prayer meeting. "I hold on to my views on non-violence as firmly as ever, but I cannot impose my views on my best friends, as they are, in the Cabinet. I cannot expect them to act against their convictions and everybody should be satisfied with my confession that I have lost my original hold upon



my friends." He did not approve of the use of arms by the Union Government for aiding the Kashmiris, he added, and though he could not approve of Sheikh Abdullah's resort to arms, he could not possibly withhold admiration both for their resourceful and praiseworthy conduct.

Two more months slipped by, and the beginning of 1948 found the Kashmir quarrel before the United Nations, and Gandhi still in Delhi. The number of refugees in the capital had grown from thirty thousand, at the time of his arrival, to the appalling total of four hundred thousand. Somehow he must bring the situation to a head. "There is apparent calm brought about by prompt military and police action. But there is a storm within the breast. It may burst forth any day. This I count as no fulfilment of my vow to 'do', which alone can keep me from death, my incomparable friend. I yearn for a heart of friendship between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. It subsisted between them the other day. Today it is non-existent. It is a state that no Indian patriot worthy of the name can contemplate with equanimity."

On January 13 he made public his decision. He would fast for an indefinite period in the hope of bringing Hindu-Muslim unity to the troubled Dominions of India and Pakistan. "Though a voice within has been beckoning for a long time, I have been shutting my ears to it lest it may be the voice of Satan, otherwise called my weakness. I never like to feel resourceless; a satyagrahi never should stop, fasting is his last resort in place of the sword—his or others. I have no answer to return to Muslim friends who see me from day to day as to what they should do. My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately a fast has been undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three days. A final conclusion has flashed upon me and it makes me happy. No man if he is pure has anything more precious to give than his life. I hope and pray I have that purity in me to justify the step. I ask you all to bless the effort, and to pray for me and with me."

The fast would end, he said, when he was satisfied there was a reunion of hearts between all communities, brought about without any outside pressure but an awakened sense of duty. "The reward will be regaining India's dwindling prestige and her fast-fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia and through that

the world. I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of her soul by India will mean the loss of hope of an aching, storm-tossed and hungry world . . . If the whole of India responds or at least Delhi does, the fast might be soon ended . . . I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must. Hence I urge everybody dispassionately to examine the purpose and let me die, if I must, in peace, which I hope is ensured. Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India by Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam . . . Just contemplate the rot that has set in our beloved India and you will rejoice to think there is a humble son of hers who is strong enough and possibly pure enough, to take the happy step. If he is neither, he is a burden on earth. The sooner he disappears and clears the Indian atmosphere of the burden the better for him and all concerned."

He had undertaken the fast for the sake of the Muslims and their position in the country, he said, and even his sternest political opponents could not remain unmoved. In Pakistan, in the West Punjab Assembly at Lahore, Malik Feroz Khan Noon described the Mahatma as "one of the greatest men the world has ever produced". If any Muslims had thought his concern for Hindu-Muslim unity no more than a tactic to gain control of the whole country they now knew better.

Thirty hours after the fast began, Gandhi walked a little more slowly than usual to his prayer meeting and said in a quieter voice, almost a hoarse whisper: "The day is not far off when I shall not have enough strength to speak or move. Although the doctors advised me not to attend this meeting, I am not in the doctors' hands but in the hands of God. I do not care even if I die." He had received a large number of telegrams asking what he expected people to do. He would ask them to purify their souls and live in harmony with each other. By January 17 the doctors were getting more and more anxious about him. Because of defective kidney function they dreaded not so much an instantaneous collapse—although he would be in the danger zone in another thirty hours—as permanent after-effects if the fast was prolonged any further.

The fast produced throughout India a reaction that found expression in peace drives, goodwill campaigns and 'change of

heart' meetings. In Delhi itself representatives of all elements, including refugees from Pakistan, resolved to create conditions of peace and friendship to save the life of the father of Indian independence, and a pledge was signed by over two hundred thousand people representing different groups. On January 15 the Government itself took the lead. "In view of the appeal made by Gandhiji to the nation, the Government have decided to remove one cause of suspicion and friction between the two states which consistently with national honour and interest it is in their power to remove. They make this spontaneous gesture in the earnest hope that it will be appreciated in the spirit in which it is made, and that it will help in producing an atmosphere of goodwill, and thereby lead this great servant of the nation to end his fast, and add still further to his unparalleled services to India. The Government have decided to implement immediately a financial agreement with Pakistan in regard to cash balances. The amount due to Pakistan on the basis of this agreement, Rupees 55 crores minus expenditure incurred by the Government of India since the 15th August on Pakistan's account, will, therefore, be paid to the Government of Pakistan. This decision is the Government's contribution, to the best of their ability, to the non-violent and noble effort made by Gandhiji in accordance with the glorious traditions of this great country towards peace and goodwill." It was widely believed that the statement represented a victory of Nehru's moderate policy over the toughness of Patel.

"They deserve the warmest thanks from the whole country," was Gandhi's message. Here at last was an act of generosity in international politics. "What then was the actuating motive? It was my fast. It changed the whole outlook. Without my fast, they could not go beyond what the law permitted and required them to do. But the present gesture on the part of the Indian Government is one of unmixed goodwill. It has put the Pakistan Government on its honour. It ought to lead to an honourable settlement not only of the Kashmir question but of all differences between the two Dominions. Friendship should replace the present enmity."

Would he now end the fast? "The letter of my vow will be satisfied if the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Delhi bring about a union which not even the conflagration around them in all other

parts of India or Pakistan will be strong enough to break." Nehru gave a personal lead in that too. He accepted a refugee family to live in his own home, although it was already too small for him and his official guests. It was one of the redeeming features of the whole tragedy of partition that Jawaharlal, under Gandhi's inspiration, was showing something of the nobility that was so desperately needed in the leadership of India. Gandhi had often taken his name literally, calling him the jewel of India. Did he remember now the morning walks in Delhi, fifteen years before? Would Gandhi be Prime Minister, they had asked? "No, it will be reserved for younger minds and stouter hands"—Jawaharlal's. The mind and hands were older now, but stout still, and faithful.

Gandhi specified seven conditions relating to the treatment of the Muslims in Delhi, including evacuation of the 117 mosques that had been seized by refugees. It was no light demand. Refugees shivering in the cold outside, and with their own homes in Pakistan seized by Muslims, could hardly be expected to resist the temptation of shelter. But the Minister for Relief would make a herculean effort to provide them all with shelter within one week, and besides the two hundred thousand pledges there was a pledge signed by over a hundred distinguished and responsible people, led by the Congress President, Rajendra Prasad, who was also a Cabinet Minister and a satyagrahi. The hundred bound themselves to see that his terms were honoured. Gandhi was satisfied, and among those who addressed him before he broke fast at the end of the fifth day he was glad to find the Pakistan High Commissioner in India, Zahid Hussain, who conveyed to him how deeply moved the people of Pakistan were about him and how anxious they were about his health. Large crowds waited outside the house in rain and bitter cold. The room where Gandhi lay was suddenly filled with cries of 'Victory to Gandhiji', and the word travelled to the eager throng, and thence throughout India and to the whole world. All over the country there were peace processions to meetings where Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs joined hands. In Subzimandi area, where some of the worst communal fighting had taken place a few months before, Congress volunteers invited Muslims to join in an all-community procession through Delhi streets to Gandhi's residence. After breaking his fast to the accompaniment of

recitations from Muslim, Parsi and Japanese scriptures, and Hindustani and Christian hymns, Gandhi spoke to the signatories of the written pledge. He would not shirk another fast should he afterwards discover he had been deceived and had deceived himself into breaking this one prematurely. "If you fully accept the implications of your pledge, you may release me from Delhi so that I might be free to go to Pakistan." In a message to his prayer meeting he wrote, "How I wish God will keep me fit enough and sane enough to render the service to humanity that lies before me." If the pledge was fulfilled it would revive with redoubled force his intense wish and prayer before God that he should be enabled to live his full span of life doing service to humanity till the last moment. The world had been startled by the miracle of Calcutta in September. Now it seemed the miracle had been repeated under even more difficult circumstances in Delhi, where his first great ordeal for communal unity had been suffered nearly twenty-five years before. Was not this the best reply to atomic bombs, wrote a leading Paris newspaper. "Is not this a voice to which men will be forced to listen one day soon, in the atomic age?" In America, a member of the House of Representatives determined to introduce a Bill asking the United States Government to erect a monument to Mahatma Gandhi in Washington. Gandhi would undoubtedly have invited the Americans to recognise the social equality of the Negroes and surviving American Indians if they seriously wished to honour him.

By 20th January he was again conducting his prayer meetings in the grounds of Birla House. Since his return to Delhi, the objections to inclusion of the passage from the *Koran* in the composite prayer had been insistent, and at first he had omitted the whole prayer. Presently he explained to his audience that they might exercise their right of hearing the prayer despite the objection of a small minority, but only if they could remain silent and not molest any interrupters. The large audiences agreed, but the objectors did not interrupt the recital, and were regularly congratulated by Gandhi on the dignity with which they conducted their protest. Satyagraha was showing a new kind of peace-making, agreement to differ without loss of good relations, something that might be a microcosm of future friendship between

the two Dominions that had so recently been united India.

This evening Gandhi was saying: "Enmity towards Muslims amounts to enmity towards India. The least I expect you to do is not to take the law into your own hands and commit inhuman acts. That would mean the end of enmity . . .", when a crude bomb exploded nearby, damaging the brick wall 30 yards from where he sat. Nobody was injured and Gandhi, with hardly a moment's pause, and without turning his head, calmed the congregation by continuing, "Don't worry, listen to me",—and went on.

The police pursued and detained the culprit who confessed that he had been enraged by Gandhi's peace campaign. He was a Hindu refugee from the West Punjab who had endured much suffering, and had been staying in a Mosque in Paharganj, which he had been told to leave as a result of the pledge given to the Mahatma. The next evening Gandhi asked his audience "to have compassion for the young man who told the police he had come to kill me because he thought that I was an evil person . . . I am told there were others helping him and using him as an instrument. I would say to them: Do not do it because such things will not save the Hindu religion . . . What I do and what I preach—that alone can save the Hindu religion . . . If God appoints anyone to save the Hindu religion, I am confident it will be myself. I have asked the police not to treat the young man harshly but to try and bring about a change of heart in him."

The fast had brought peace to Delhi, although it had brought deadly peril to him. On January 25 he hinted that having fulfilled his mission in Delhi, he might go to Wardha. But he could go only with the solemn guarantee that things would be well during his absence. He also wanted to go to Pakistan. But since Pakistan was now foreign territory, he could go there only with the permission and consent, if not at the invitation of the Pakistan Government. He had surely made good the claim of seven months before to be a citizen of both India and Pakistan, and if the telegram from the Muslim leaders of Junagadh, the little principality in Kathiawar, that had been the scene of struggle between India and Pakistan, ending with occupation by Indian armed forces, was in any way representative, the

Muslims themselves would now recognise as much. "They prayed to the Providence to create conditions which may induce Gandhiji to break his fast," they said, "and the hearts of Muslims go out to the Almighty, as the life of Mahatmaji was never before so precious to humanity in general, and Muslims in particular, as at present when the world has not emerged safely from the convulsions, agony and suffering of the post-war period."

At this moment when the life of Gandhi was never so precious to Hindus and Muslims, to India and the world, it was suddenly ended. He walked from the house to the lawn where the prayer meetings were held, a few minutes late, on the evening of January 30. "As Gandhiji was going up the step to the prayer platform," wrote Manu Gandhi, one of the grand-nieces on whose shoulders he was lightly leaning, "a man suddenly broke through the rows of the congregation and bent, as if he were bowing, before him. Assuming he was trying to take the dust from his feet, I dissuaded him, afraid that Gandhiji would trip, and caught his left hand. The man pushed me and started shooting. The first bullet hit Gandhiji in the abdomen. He chanted 'Ram Ram' (O God, O God). Two more shots followed. He fell back, his spectacles dangling and his sandals coming away. Blood gushed from his abdomen and his heart, and as he was brought towards Birla House, he lost consciousness. Perhaps he had a premonition. Before retiring last night he said: 'This is a strange world. How long can one be at the game?' Early this morning after prayers he said to Bishwan, his life-long personal attendant, 'bring me all my important letters. I must reply to them for tomorrow I may never be.'" He died half an hour after the shooting, at 5.40 p.m.

The miracle was that he had lived so long. There had been the European lynching mob that attacked him in Durban fully fifty years before; the Pathan who had struck him down with a cudgel in the Transvaal ten years later, and who had drawn from him the prayer that the bloodshed that day might unite the Indian communities with sacred ties; there was the man with the knife who waited for him in the doorway of the meeting at Johannesburg, and was converted by a few simple words of kindness; at Poona, where his assassin lived, a bomb had been hurled at him in 1934 by the communal fanatics who were enraged by his work for the Untouchables; there was the other

bomb a few days before his death as he was speaking of 'the end of enmity,' and which he had not suffered to interrupt his discourse. Now the weapon of the West, the Italian revolver, brought back by some Indian soldier (inured to bloodshed by participation in the World War, into which India had been plunged without her consent and had fought against Gandhi's counsel, that the only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance), that gun had done its worst. It was the truth that Krishna Menon spoke in London the next day; we all shared in the guilt of the murder of Mahatma Gandhi.

It was no accident but part of a careful conspiracy. A bomb attempt on Nehru had been frustrated only a few days before, and Gandhi's assassin, although he tried to shoot himself immediately to escape mob fury, was ready afterwards to affirm his deed against the conscience of the whole world. He was a young Hindu, editor of a newspaper of Mahasabha sympathies. These communal extremists would give Pakistan no quarter, and the demonstration that Gandhi could still sway the Cabinet, despite the presence in it of their representatives, had infuriated them to the point of assassination. The effect of the news on the Hindu community was to turn their fury away from the Muslims and towards their own extremists. Gandhi had brought out the hidden poison. Hinduism was suffering in its own body, learning the nature of its own disease and trying frenziedly to eradicate it.

The following day the body was borne on a bier scattered with flower petals, with head uncovered, to the burning pyre on the banks of the river Jamuna, where Nehru kissed the feet in homage before one of Gandhi's sons lighted the pyre. The cries raised by the vast crowds of sorrowing humanity along the five mile route were not sorrowful but triumphant. The only words were 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai'—Victory to Mahatma Gandhi, and when the flames rose around him the seven hundred thousand mourners chanted 'Mahatma Gandhi *Amar Ho Gae*'—Mahatma Gandhi has become immortal. Neither the instant reaction of the prayer meeting that attacked this murderous interrupter, nor the assaults upon Mahasabha supporters that followed were victories for Mahatma Gandhi. Not those who cry the name, but those who keep the commandments are the true followers. Gandhi himself had said, speaking of property



and inheritance two years before: "The principle of succession to property should be based on a new fundamental, namely, those who act up to the wishes of the departed soldier carry on his work should be the real heirs and not those born in the family."

The world said it was the act of a madman. Gandhi had scorned an escort because he believed that he would die only in Gods' good time. Was that only a delusion? Could he have died otherwise? Death in a fast against war would have been suicidal defeat; death in extreme age an anti-climax. In this world of tragedy the end was surely worthy of all that went before. To be cast in such a tragedy, Gandhi had to attempt identification with all that lives. Satyagraha is as much the Russian Christianity of Tolstoy, the visionary English communism of Ruskin, and the mystical American anarchism of Thoreau, as it is the Hindu gospel of disinterested action. In the crystal of his life we see all these as they are, waves on one eternal ocean. Gandhian vegetarianism is obeisance to the mystery and miracle of creation in the non-human realm of nature: "Man, not having the power of creation, does not possess the right of destroying the meanest creature that lives." Gandhian economics and politics are focussed on immediate environment by the discipline of Swadeshi, but the gesture is through the nation to the world, and was made explicit in appeals to Western and Asiatic leaders during these last tempest-tossed years.

"Abstract truth," he taught, "has no value, unless it incarnates in human beings who represent it by proving their readiness to die for it." Gandhi gave proof, and his truth has passed into the spiritual life of the world as creative heaven.

The implication of this martyrdom for non-violence is world-moving. Through Gandhi's identification with all that lives he appeals as Jesus did: "In as much as you do it unto the least of my brothers you do it unto me." The grief-demented Hindus who attacked Mahasabha communalists struck Gandhi; Indian police shooting at rioters, and soldiers firing on attacking tribesmen in Kashmir, aimed fresh bullets at the Mahatma; when India by solemn judicial act executed the assassin, India was guilty of blind love which, Gandhi sternly warned, is the most abject and hopeless of slaveries. But the challenge is equally to ourselves

to make final renunciation of violence. Now that the tides were running towards war in partitioned India— a vivisection from which he alone withheld assent—and now that the West also was partitioned and driving towards international immolation, Gandhi's survival was impossible; for he was too brave to bow beneath the level of history to which he had been summoned.

The end was apt, its quality symbolic. At Delhi two ways of life confronted each other, and the last appeal was made in the instant of greatest sacrifice. If we had not understood Gandhi after more than fifty years of sacrifice and service, we should not have understood him much better if we had selfishly taken another half century of labour from him. But at Delhi the light became suddenly more intense, and the pattern was plain for all to see. The khaki-coated figure, hands clasped in prayer, that we have no right to judge insincere, but concealing between them his European revolver, is also a man of courage, of principle, even of self-sacrifice, killing for a cause greater than private grievance, knowing that his own life was almost certainly forfeit. It is the figure of the soldier, doing evil that good may come.

Gandhi confronted him: a figure of life and love, of innocence and courage, such as the world has rarely seen before, but yet recognizable to the humblest as the humanity to which mankind must rise or perish. Finally, we are either the man with the gun, or the man who confronts the murderer in the name of the unity of all that lives. On this level there is no Third Force; our tragedy is that we pretend there is.

After the miracle of Calcutta in September and the Delhi fast a few days before his death, there was fresh talk of using the spiritual power of non-violence in the West. The power was not Gandhi's, his was faith, appeal to the godlike in man, striking fire from the stoniest breast by conviction more adamant. The power blossomed from lifelong and undeviating renunciation of war. His death in Delhi was not the defeat of non-violence, only the final proof of his teaching that non-violence was for the many not only for the saints. The saints can only die for us; we must redeem ourselves. That we have no comparable figure left in the world is the measure of our materialism and our peril. But he will not let us make scapegoats of our spiritual leaders. We too must fulfil the condition which he laid down by the manner of his life and death: "Non-violence is now, has ever

been, and I pray to God it ever may be, my final creed for all occasions."

The crown passes. Our part is to be grateful for a life in our time more than any of us have deserved, more than seemed historically possible in the murderous interplay of destructive forces and unnatural striving—to be grateful for the proof that we are not enslaved by our historical environment, and, in our degree, to live likewise.

On the first page of this Life are some words by Ramakrishna. At the end of it we may complete the quotation:

"The iron, once converted into gold by the touch of the philosopher's stone, may be kept under the earth or thrown into a rubbish heap. It will remain gold, and never return to its former condition. Such is his case who has once touched the feet of God. Whether he dwells in the bustle of the world, or in the solitude of the forest, nothing can ever contaminate him again."

Gandhi's ashes were immersed in the sacred waters at the confluence of the Ganges and Jamuna rivers at Allahabad on February 12, 1948, before a million people who thronged the banks. Other portions of the ashes were simultaneously immersed at sacred places in fifty other parts of India and Pakistan, where millions more were gathered. Did they also throw away the sword of gold? "Gandhi has left as his heritage a spiritual force that must in God's good time prevail over arms and armaments and dark doctrines of violence," wrote the *New York Times*. "The rest remains for history's inexorable hand to write down." How will God's good time overcome history's inexorable process? Is not God's good time the eternal Now? Let God's servants claim their heritage now, and first among them the poor, the outcasts and the sufferers whom Mahatma Gandhi rightly named Harijans, the dearly loved children and servants of God. Gandhi is still identified with all that lives: if life honours his non-violence he lives forever. Gandhi is at one with life where life is at peace with itself.

Did we suppose that one unaided man could win peace for us? God help our blindness if we did! Gandhi knew and taught that the people would know peace when the miracle of non-violence was shown to the many, that they might in their degree do likewise. Rarely in the life of the world comes a man,

a spiritual Atlas, who raises the great globe upon his shoulders for a moment, raises our vision to the level of his own by a superhuman feat. The world crushes him to death. Whether or not he dies defeated depends on how many people remain faithful to the vision he made real to them.



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